eyboards for Amstrad users by Amstrad addicts

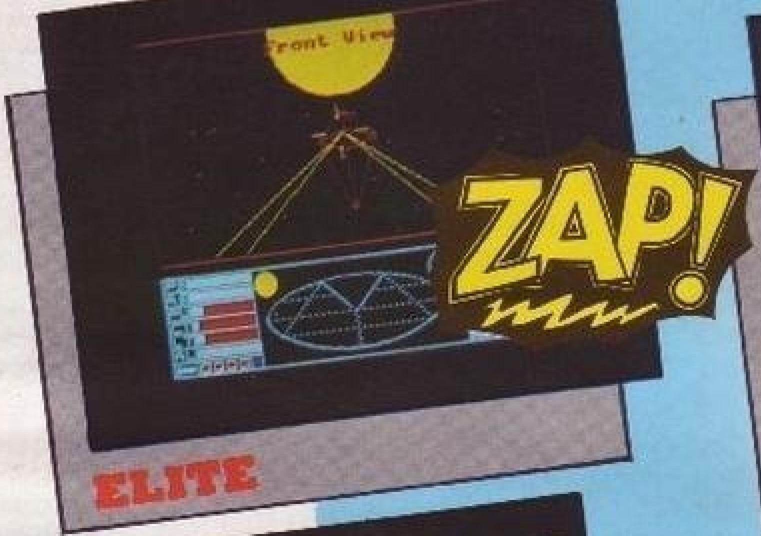
No.5 February 1986 £1

NOT an official Amstrad publication!!

AMSTRAD ACTION

THE MOULD-BREAKING MEGAZINE FROM FUTURE PUBLISHING

NEW YEAR BLOCKBUSTERS!

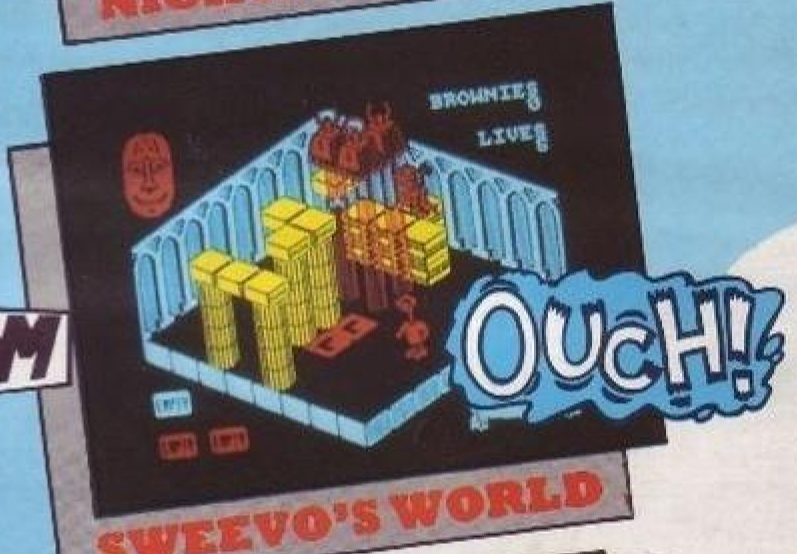


ELITE

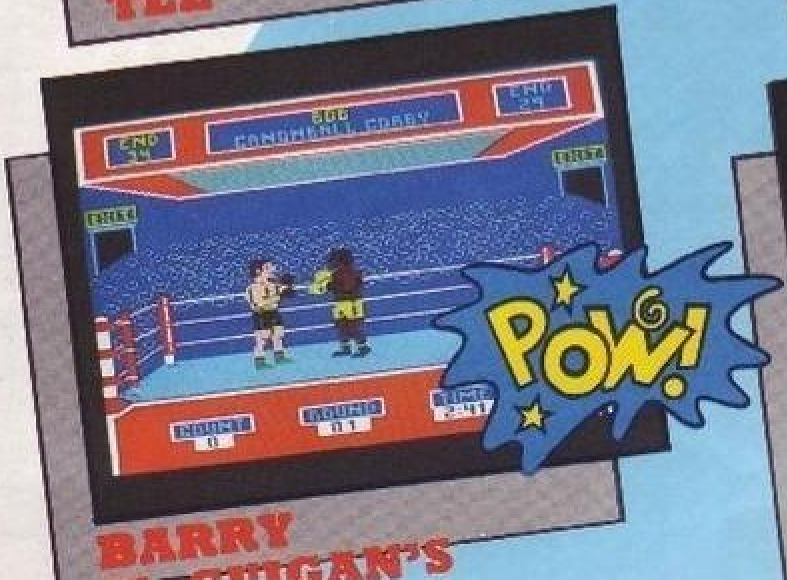
SCORE
Aargh!

NIGHTSHADE

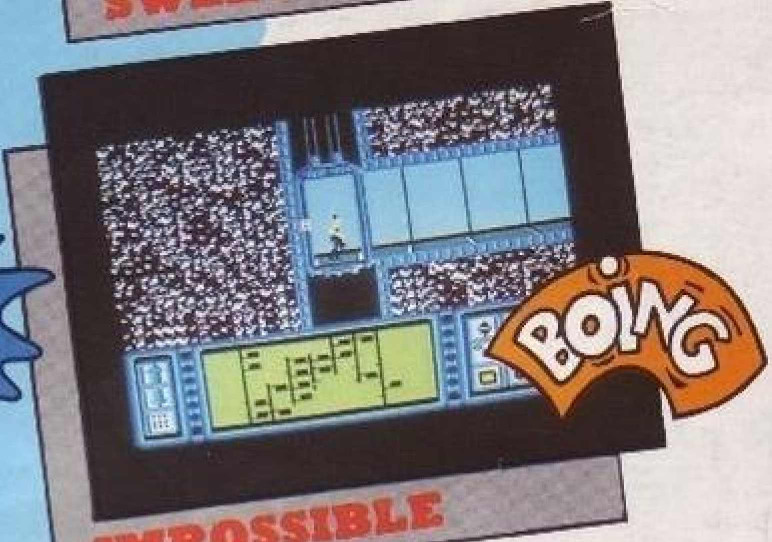
TLL



SWEEVO'S WORLD



BARRY McGUIGAN'S BOXING



IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

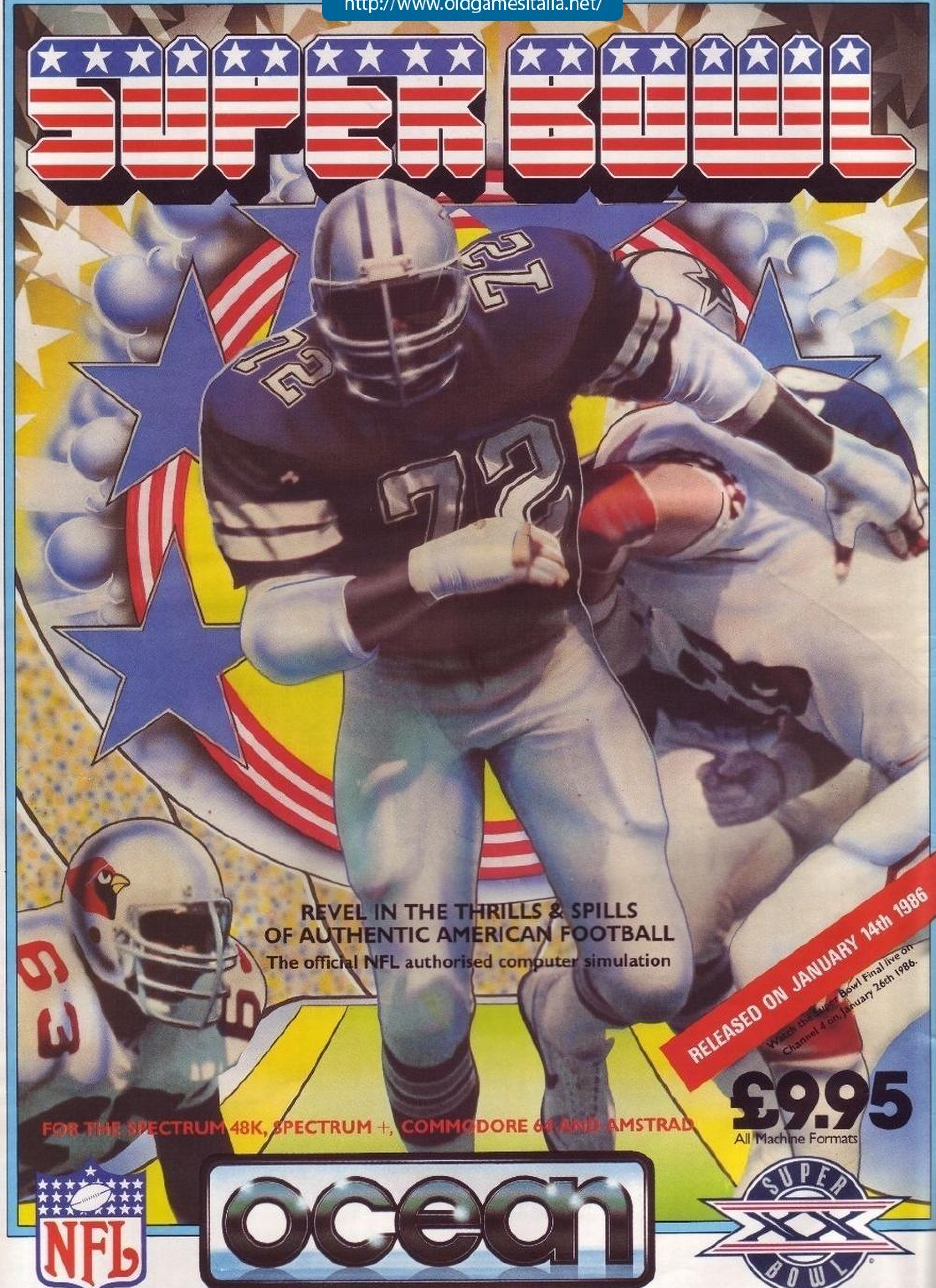
TAPE-to-DISC
We investigate the utilities that speed up your game play

MONSTER MAPS
Strangeloop, in all its glory. Plus Dragontorc and Nightshade!

HOME ACCOUNTS
How to make the most of Arnold in the battle for financial solvency

Plus *Music Composer* – a great type-in to make Arnold sing. *Durell* – we preview 3 great new games. *The Worm in Paradise* – The Pilgrim delves into Level 9's latest.

high- scores and much, much more.



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JANUARY 26, 1986

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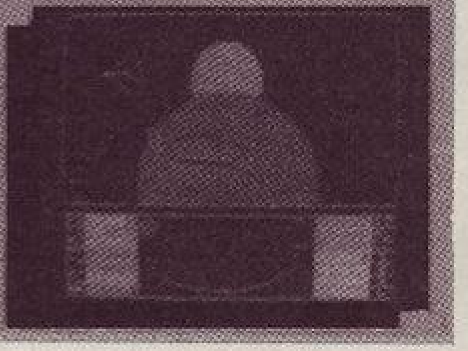
THE LINE-UP

AMSTRAD ACTION FEBRUARY 1986

HOT REVIEWS

50 Elite. The massive mega-game available at last on the Amstrad. Explore, shoot, trade – and achieve Elite status.



36 Nightshade. I wouldn't like to be in Sabreman's shoes – those mutating monsters are *mean*. Pretty houses though.'

48 Sweevo's World. A wacky new departure for Gargoyle. Stunning 3D graphics, oodles of humour, bags of puzzles.

48 TLL. Have you ever seen the like of this scrolling? No, you haven't. Vortex swoop down with another winner.

54 Barry McGuigan's Boxing. Bazza knocks hell out of numerous opponents. Great graphics, great animation, great fun.

FEBRUARY SPECIALS

28 Tape-to-Disc. If you want to get those mega-games on to disc and load them quick, read Joseph Winchester's survey of the available utilities.

74 Durell Durell. In Somerset's green and pleasant land, Durell are cooking up three terrific games for Arnold. We went to have a look.

64 Impossible Mission. Preview of the hot and challenging game from US Gold.

84 Strangeloop – the map! A massive undertaking, but we've mapped the latest Virgin mega-monster-game.

14 Home Accounts. You've got to keep track of those pennies somehow. Bertram Carrot – our man with the keen eyes – looks at software that aims to help you do it.

80 Obsidian – mapped! The ins and outs of Artic's engrossing game.

JUICY OFFERS

96 Subscribe. OK, so it's 1986. But we're still giving you the chance of getting your hands on our Christmas subs offer of two FREE US Gold games when you subscribe to AA.

86 Grab a Gremlin. 25 pairs of *Monty* and *Profanation* are up for grabs in this groovy competiton.

93 Special Offers. Massive savings on *Elite* and *Graphics Adventure Creator*. Go for it!

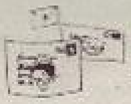
87 Strangeloop. Great prizes on offer for those who can find their way through our map of Virgin's game.

YOU!
STRANGE

72 Win a disc drive! Incentive are offering you the chance of getting you adventure published – as well as getting a disc-drive – in this ace Pilgrim Comp.

ACTION REGULARS

6 Ed-Lines. The ed blathers on. Plus some very important announcements.

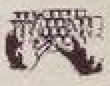


8 ReAction. First letters of the new year. All human life is here.

12 Amscene. All the news that's fit to print from the Amstrad scene.

14 Serious Software. There's such a lot in it: Home Accounts, Business Accounts, Laser Basic, Sprite Generators...

30 Type-ins. Another great listing. This prog makes Arnold a powerful music centre.

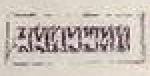


35 Action Test. Page after page of our detailed and colourful game reviews.

62 Voice of the People. YOU tell us what YOU think of the games we've already reviewed.

66 Adventures. The Pilgrim gets to grips with Level 9's latest and brings the good news of Infocom's arrival on Arnold.

78 Cheat Mode. Fair means and foul to get the most out of your games.

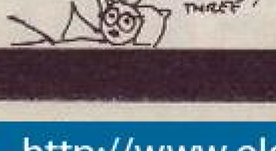


88 High Score. Can you measure up to the country's top gamesters? Find out here.

90 Hot Stuff Mail order and special offers. Buy £15 of software and get one game FREE.

92 Readers' Charts Your favourites in the worlds of games and serious software.

93 Forms. The all-in-one action entry form.



'AT LAST I'M ON PAGE THREE!'

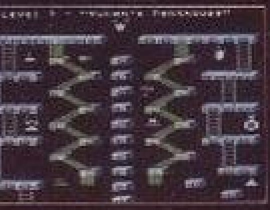
BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK!

Twenty-five Levels.

Multi Channel Music.

Dual Joystick Capability.

"Bounty Bob Strikes Back" is the sequel to "Miner 2049er" which was a huge success on the Commodore 64 and Atari machines. Now on the Amstrad, this version features Bob's toughest challenge to date and he needs your help more than ever before to guide him through the mine. The mutant organisms within have multiplied and over run the mine entirely, making it extremely difficult to survive the hazards of the underground passageways. Using high powered special equipment in the twenty-five caverns is Bob's only hope of achieving his objective of securing the mine and defeating the evil plans of Yukon Yohan.



OUT NOW

BEACH-HEAD

Multiscreen 3-D Arcade Action

A peaceful island is being held by a ruthless dictator and his troops. As Chief Commander of land and sea forces in the Pacific, you must obtain a quick naval victory and then invade the island with land forces. If your troops succeed in penetrating the island defence systems, the most difficult challenge still remains: capturing the enemy fortress of Khun-Lin.

Beach-Head is a multiscreen action game which requires different skills and provides new sequences as you progress through the game.

AMMUNITION
BATTLE STATIONS

OUT NOW

BRUCE LEE

Twenty secret chambers to explore

Unique multiple player options

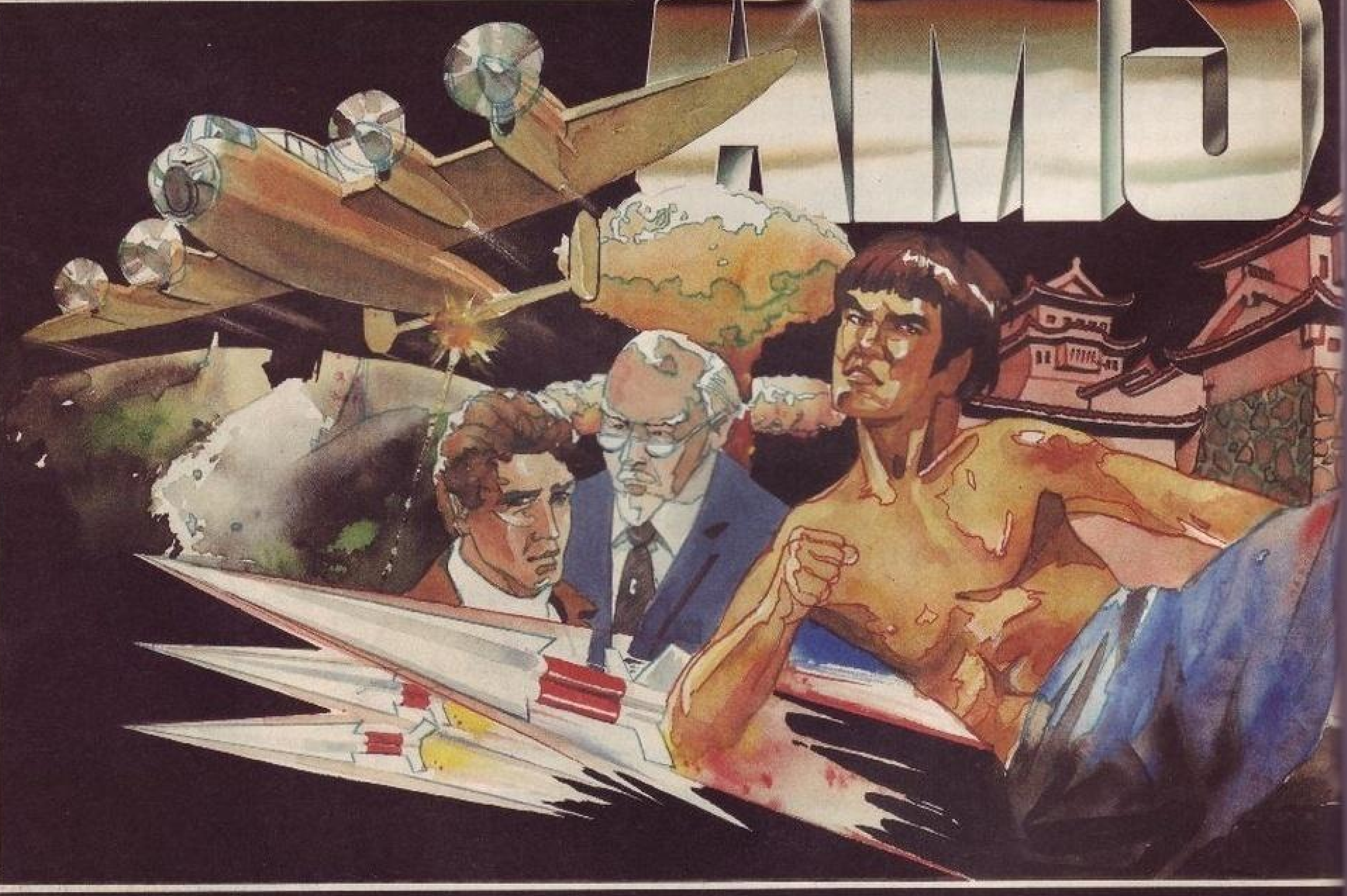
Dazzling graphics and animation

In "Bruce Lee" you will experience the power and the glory of Bruce Lee, one of the greatest masters of the martial arts.

As Bruce Lee, you will confront a barrage of vicious foes. You must penetrate the fortress of the Evil Wizard and claim his fortunes. Destroying the Wizard will earn you immortality and infinite wealth!

OUT NOW

THE BEST OF AMERICA..



U.S. GOLD ON THE AMSTRAD*-ON

RAID!

Gripping Arcade Action

Multiple 3-D Scrolling Screens

The scene is one of World-wide conflict. The only hope of saving the World from nuclear annihilation is an attack by stealth bombers on the launch sites.

As squadron leader, you must lead your troops on a virtual suicide mission: knock-out the launch sites, and proceed to the command headquarters. Armed only with the weapons you carry, you must destroy the defence centre and stop the attack!

OUT NOW

DAMBUSTERS

Superb Graphics and Sound

At 21.15 hours on the evening of May 16th 1943, a flight of specially prepared Lancaster bombers left R.A.F. Scampton for Germany. And so, one of the most daring and courageous raids of the Second World War was underway. Now you have the opportunity to relive the drama and excitement of this famous action via your Amstrad computer. You will take the parts of Pilot, Navigator, Front and Rear Gunners, Bomb Aimer and Flight Engineer as you play this authentic reconstruction of the night's events. The multiple screen action is complemented by a comprehensive package of flight documents and authentic material from the period.

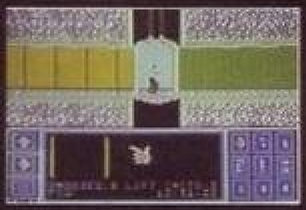
SOON

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

Game of the Year 1985-
British Micro Awards

Message from the Agency computer.....
".... Your mission, Agent 4125 is to foil a horrible plot. From an underground laboratory, Elvin, the scientist, is holding the world hostage under threat of nuclear annihilation. You must penetrate his stronghold, avoid his human-seeking robots and find pieces of the security code.

Somersault over the robots or use a precious snooze code to deactivate them long enough to search each room. Use the Agency's computer to unscramble the passwords from the code pieces, or try to solve them yourself. You'd better beware.....This mission is stamped IMPOSSIBLE!"



OUT NOW

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All American Software

U.S. Gold Limited, Unit 10,
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Heneage Street, Birmingham B7 4LY.
Telephone: 021-359 8881 Telex: 337268.

GREAT GAME AFTER ANOTHER !

'All scre

Dear Readers,

You might notice that this first issue of 1986 is just a trifle slimmer than the last one of 1985. Well, Christmas excess has to be trimmed, as a million new year's resolutions will testify – but we hope to be back to a whopping size again next month.

Our new year resolution is just to get better and better with every issue. Yes, I know – you're wondering how AA could possibly get any better than it is now. Well, 'brill, fab, groovy' etc. as it already is, we think there's still room for improvement. And the people to suggest it are yourselves. So please keep the letters coming in 1986. We read them all and really do try to cater to the needs of the Amstrad-owning public.

Our cover this month features games because we think 1986 is going to see a breakthrough for Arnold. No longer will you have to wait for conversions: games will be developed simultaneously on the Arnold and other machines. If not *before* other machines. Needless to say, we'll be bringing you all the latest news and reviews from the world of games.

Other sections of the mag will not be neglected. But remember that Type-ins, ReAction and Voice of the People are all dependent on your *input* for their success. The more you write, the more we can print and the more you'll know about how other Amstrad owners feel about the scene.

It's undoubtedly going to be another big year for Amstrad – rumours abound that new machines are on the way. With your help we're going to make it a big year for Amstrad Action as well.

Peter Connor

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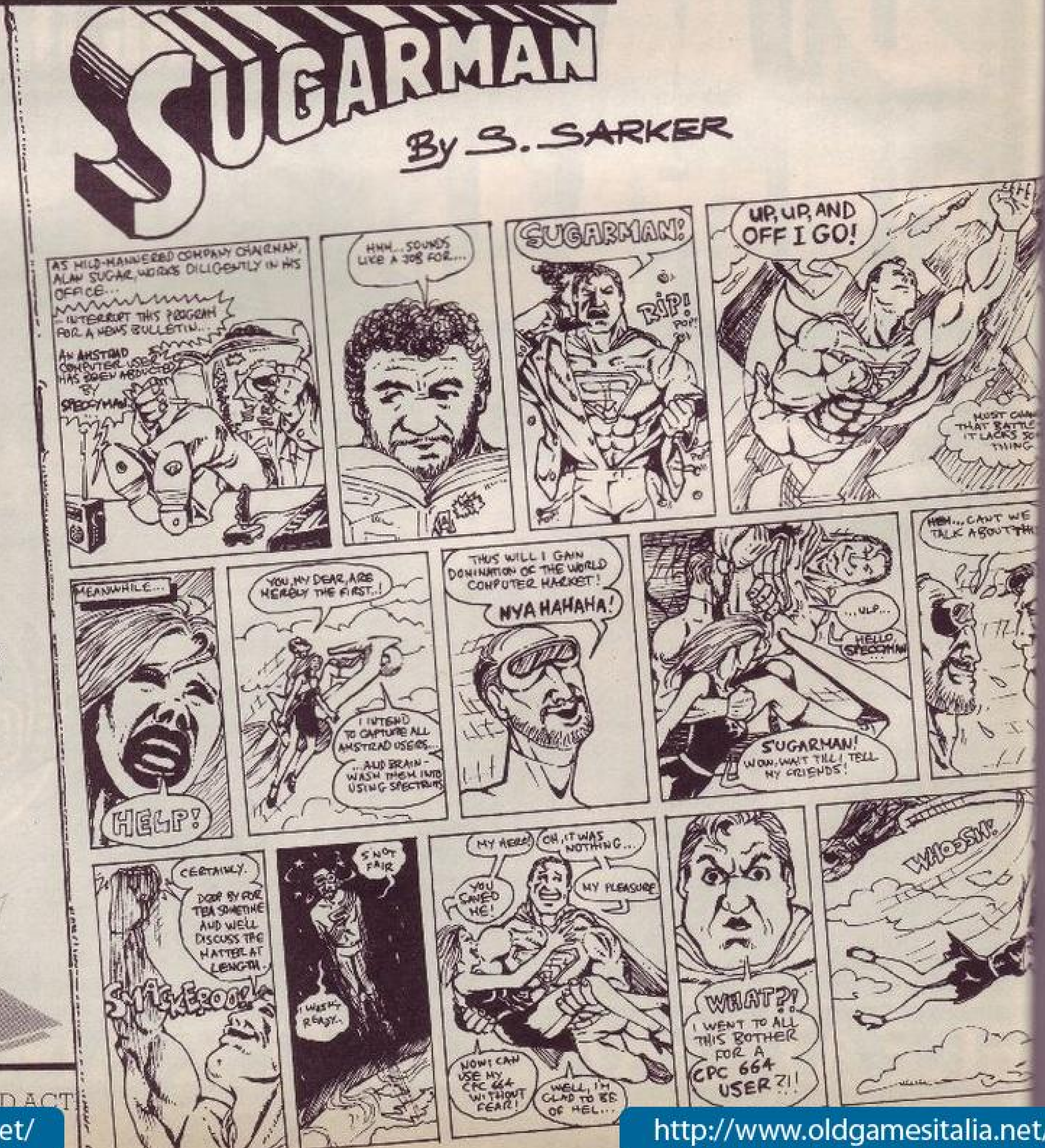
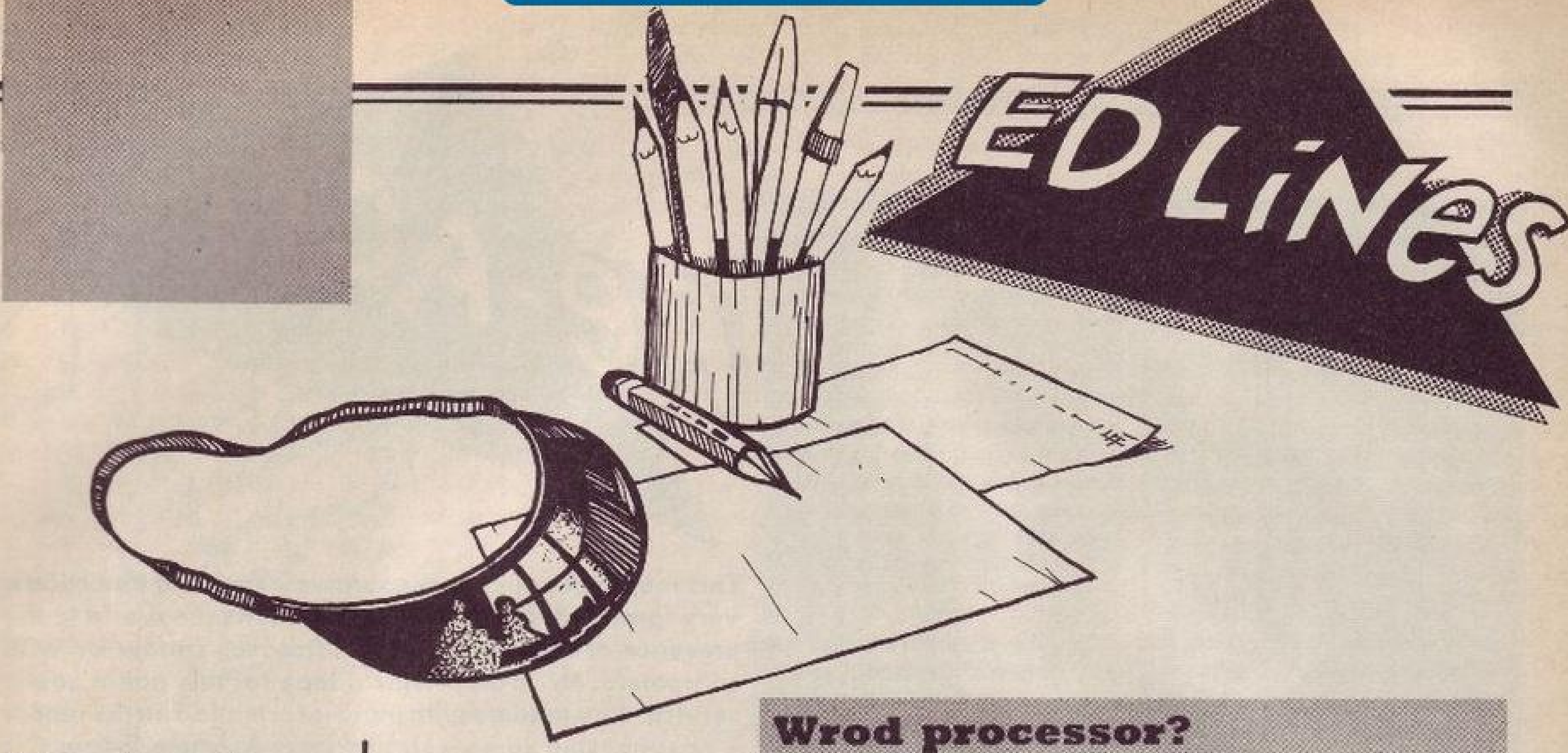
Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's *Sugarman*! The greatest exponent of home computers the world has ever known.

Here's the first instalment in what could be the long-running story of *Sugarman*'s adventures in the world of computing. It comes to you courtesy of S.Sarkar of London. You can also read a letter by the same person in ReAction.


SUGARMAN
By S. SARKER
AS MILD-MANNERED COMPANY CHAIRMAN, ALAN SUGAR, WORKS DILIGENTLY IN HIS OFFICE...
...INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM FOR A NEWS BULLETIN...
AN AMSTRAD COMPUTER USER HAS BEEN ABDUCTED BY SPEEDYMAN...
HMM... SOUNDS LIKE A JOB FOR...
SUGARMAN!
RIP!
POP!
UP, UP, AND OFF I GO!
MUST CHANGE THAT BATTLE... IT LACKS SO... THING
MEANWHILE...
HELP!
YOU, MY DEAR, ARE MERELY THE FIRST..!
I INTEND TO CAPTURE ALL AMSTRAD USERS...
...AND BRAINWASH THEM INTO USING SPECTRUMS
THUS WILL I GAIN DOMINATION OF THE WORLD COMPUTER MARKET!
NYA HAHAHA!
...ULP...
HELLO SPEEDYMAN...
SUGARMAN!
WOW, WAIT TILL I TELL MY FRIENDS!
HMM... CANT WE TALK ABOUT TH
CERTAINLY.
DROP BY FOR TEA SOMETIME AND WE'LL DISCUSS THE MATTER AT LENGTH...
SMACKEROO!
'S NOT FAIR
I WASN'T READY..
MY HERO!
OH, IT WAS NOTHING...
YOU SAVED ME!
MY PLEASURE
NOW I CAN USE MY CPC 664 WITHOUT FEAR!
WELL, I'M GLAD TO BE OF HEL...
WHAT?!
I WENT TO ALL THIS BOTHER FOR A CPC 664 USER?!!
WHOOSH!

ED LiNES



Number 1 hits the top

The Christmas issue's cover cassette has gained a lot of fans – apart from yourselves. *Number 1* in particular has been grab-factoring people all over the nation. One of these spaced out roller-skating freaks is none other than the editor of another Amstrad magazine, who confessed to us that he'd been playing it 'all day long'. Yet more proof that Amstrad Action refreshes the readers that other mags can't reach.

Beat the clock

9.34 p.m. on a December night. The AA deadline for colour pages looms. Will the cover get to the railway station in time for the 10.00 p.m. to Bristol?

The editor screeches to a halt outside the offices in his clapped-out Mini Clubman (to be distinguished from the publisher's clapped-out ford Fiesta). Into the back leap George Murphy and Trevor Gilham, clutching the cover, a torch and a variety of pens. The car speeds off, cutting corners, screeching round bends, overtaking hay-wagons as it does its top speed of 35 m.p.h. Fortunately, the local constabulary are not in evidence.

From the back of the car comes a string of bizzare phrases: '20% cyan here? Yeh, I think so. Does this tint go behind the logo? Of course it does.' With minutes to spare the car pulls up at Castle Cary BR. Figures tumble out and rush into the office with the very important parcel.

Mission accomplished. But if the cover of this issue does happen to look just the teeniest bit *strange*, you'll know why.

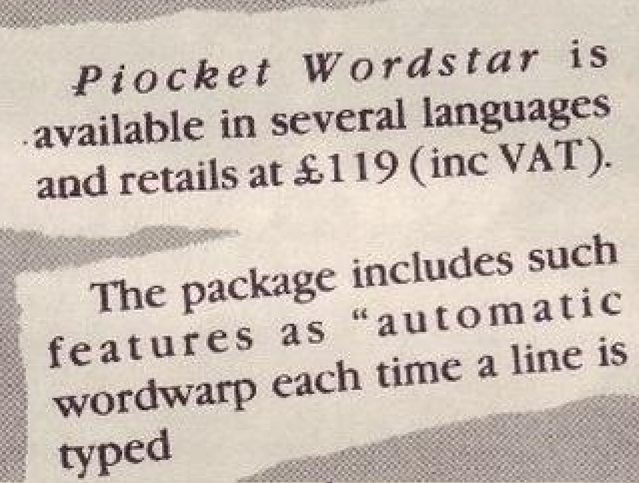
Subscription Games

There is a law about producing programs which every software development manager should paint on the wall opposite his desk. It says 'If a programmer thinks his program will be finished in a week, allow two months. If he says it'll be done tomorrow, allow two weeks. If he says it was finished yesterday, chain him to the table until you've satisfied yourself that the thing still isn't riddled with bugs.'

Such is the way of programming. All of which is to say that two of the games in our latest subscription offer have been further delayed. *Impossible Mission*, originally due out early in November might not now be out until mid-January. And *Dambusters* could even be delayed until February. Anyone who ordered one of these games and therefore hasn't yet received his parcel can write to us or ring us and switch to one of the other four US Gold games in the offer, all of which are available.

Wrod processor?

This snippet from the trade paper *Computer Trade Weekly* just goes to show that even the world's most popular word processor cannot ward off the evil eye of typographical error. Here at AA we use *Wordstar* to write the magazine. As regular readers will know, there are no tyopgraphicla errors **here.**



Piocket Wordstar is available in several languages and retails at £119 (inc VAT).

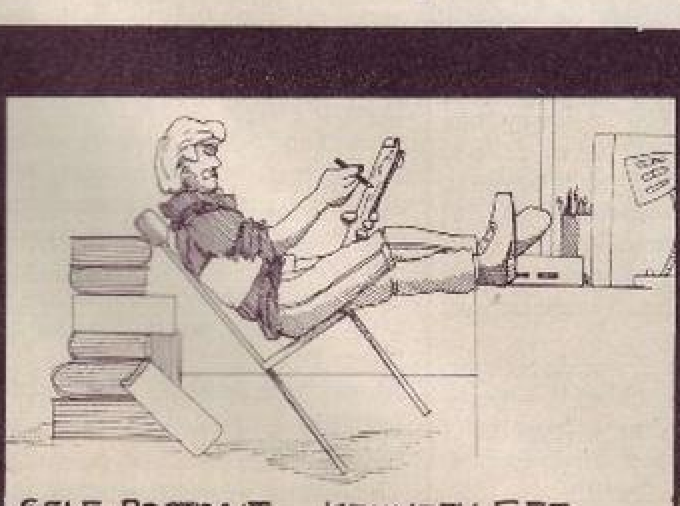
The package includes such features as "automatic wordwarp each time a line is typed

Shadowfire sorrow

Bad news for people who took advantage of our Beyond games offer but are still waiting for *Shadowfire* – it's now not scheduled for release until March, and, judging from experience, could come later still. We suggest you take up the offer included in the letter we sent to you offering you another game instead – for example, one of the US Gold games: Raid, Beach Head, Bruce Lee or Bounty Bob Strikes Back. Alternatively you can have your money back.

Cartoons – again

Bags and bags of humour came in. These cartoons have had us rolling in the aisles. From the vast number we've so far chosen one draughtsman to draw for us – Kenneth Fee, a student from Dundee.(Sorry about the rhyme). Ken's an Amstrad fan, so he really knows the scene. His work will be adorning our pages from now on.

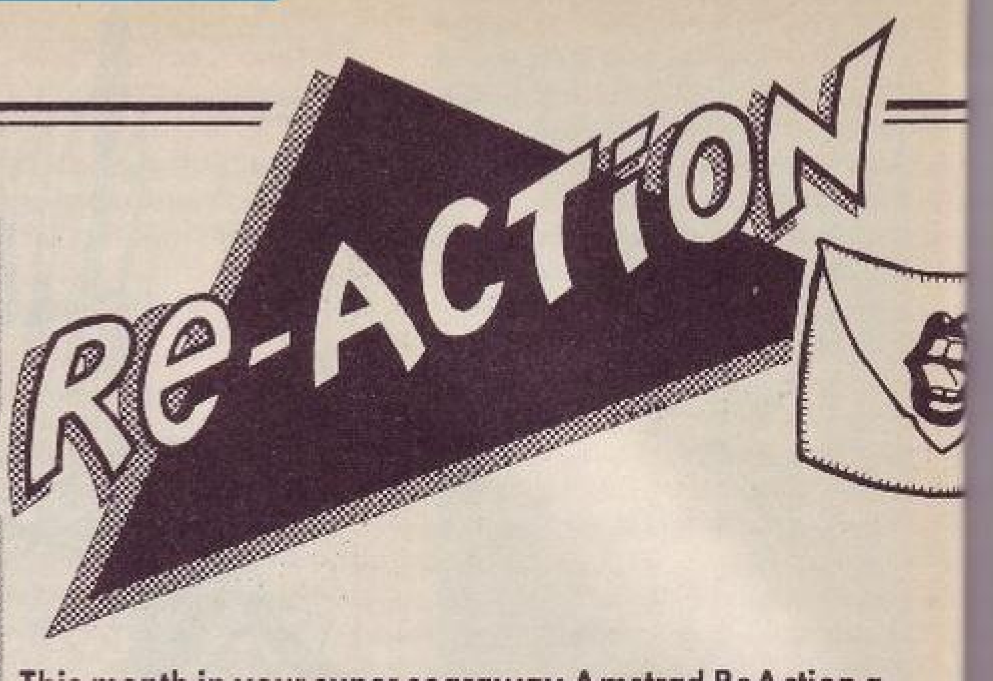


SELF-PORTRAIT KENNETH FEE

'I WONDER IF
HE WOULD LIKE
POSE
IM'

Durell preview

Production gremlins crept into these pages, with the result that two small, but important, labels were left off. So, we hereby give notice that the screen shot of *Critical Mass* is of the CBM64 version, and the shot of *Saboteur* is of the Spectrum version.



This month in your super soaraway Amstrad ReAction a very 'gruntled' Mr. Worall of Ayr alerts the world to the presence of two horrible new diseases connected with computers. Mr. Worall wins a tape for this noble public service. Any readers with more information on the matter – or suggested cures – should write in immediately. It's your duty!

The other winner of a tape from the Amstrad Action mystery selection is Betty Ware of Dorset, for revealing her feelings about the mag and its editor. Letters in this vein are always welcome, although we can't promise that many of them will be printed.

Remember – if you've got an opinion about anything in the magazine or anything in the Amstrad world, then get it down on paper and get it to us. ReAction is for YOU.

Send your missives to: *ReAction, Amstrad Action, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

Gruntled

After reading issues 2 and 3 of Amstrad Action I am, unlike the newsagent, distinctly gruntled by your magazine. So much so that I have accepted your Christmas Subscription offer, entered the competitions and enclosed a cheque for £1.30 which I trust is sufficient to cover the cost of your posting to me a copy of issue no.1 which I missed (all this talk of the Amsyclopedia intrigues me.) All this and I don't even own a home computer yet – soon to be rectified by the purchase of a CPC 6128.

However, this non-ownership has endowed me with a certain objectivity when viewing the home computer scene and I have noticed that the "spreadsheet syndrome" is rather widespread – this is where an adult professes an interest in only the serious side of computing simply because they are too embarassed to admit to themselves that they have bought their machine for its entertainment value.

Similarly with the 'plain brown wrapper syndrome' – why be ashamed of having an independent enough mind to choose a different machine from that of your friends and acquantainces?

The largest slice of the software market, by far, is for fun, so come on – let's all admit it and enjoy it while it lasts. They'll soon enough be running our central heating, putting the cat out and locking up at night for us.

Incidentally, it's your honest approach to the fun side of computing that I appreciate.

Criticisms of your magazine? Not really – still a few printing errors, but then my daily paper is that famous printing error – *The Graudian* – and none the worse for that.

Ideas for future issues – well, once you've established yourselves, perhaps a regular column by some erudite fellow with an original, perhaps amusing, but most of all personal view of the home computer industry in general. I'm sure regular contributions by a lady would also provide a refreshing viewpoint. Finally, either a monthly or annual index of software and hardware reviewed to date giving page and issue in which reviewed along with a pithy verdict on its merits or otherwise.

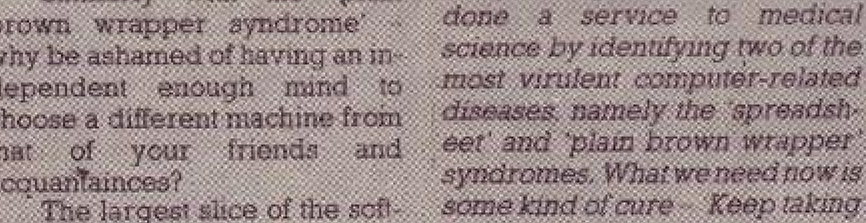
I wish you every success and look forward to being entertained by you (and informed of course) in the future.

Finally may I apologise for length of this missive? It has grown almost without my noticing, rather like the weeds in my garden.

P G Worrall
Ayr

No need to apologise about the length, Mr. Worrall – we were a bit short anyway this month. Seriously, though, I feel you have done a service to medical science by identifying two of the most virulent computer-related diseases, namely the 'spreadsheet' and 'plain brown wrapper' syndromes. What we need now is some kind of cure – Keep taking the Amstrad Actions', perhaps. I'd be interested to hear from anyone with ideas on the subject. As for that 'erudite, original, amusing' writer, I'd love to meet him. Or her. But where is he/she? You wouldn't happen to have someone in mind, would you?

Finally, you have hit on our secret. The typographical errors in AA are based on those in The Grauniad, *which is the paper we all read when we can't get* The Sin.



Second to None

In these hard times, myself being out of work, and with an Amstrad 464 and numerous software to support, I had to write to air my views and try and capture your poor little country hearts. Your mag is the best thing to hit the streets since the Sinclair C5. I hope you're outselling those contraptions.

Your selling power after all is second to none and led me willingly to subscribe – not easy I can tell you – but it did have a little to do with freebies, and of course a little with the mag. Although I did hold out until Issue 2 before writing out the cheques. Yes, cheque(s) in plural. I also bought other goodies.

Now to my grievances. It annoys me how software becomes dated in a matter of months. I know it's a fast no-punches-pulled market, but by the time I've saved and bought a piece of software it's nearly out of date or, to quote you, 'an oldie'. Take *Pyjamarama* and *Beachhead* or my first and only true adventure *Message from Andromeda*. Three of my games were acquired only 6 months ago and are already oldies. Maybe it's because I'm a latecomer or the market's moving too fast. There are advantages in compilations for Christmas and disadvantages in that we, the customers, can't keep up. Eventually things must slow down or come to a horrible grinding halt, but I won't be first to say, 'stop the roundabout, I want to get off.'

Amstrad Software is catching up and by the end of next year will overtake its rivals in the software stands in the shops. Going off one shop here (Boots) the Amstrad display was nothing short of pathetic at first, 6-8 months ago, and I wondered at first had I done the right thing. Now it shares a full side with Spectrum, with Commodore on the other side. We Ammies are already equal in Software terms to Specccies, ahead in hardware, but them Commies are going to take some beating, so hold on to your joysticks, we're coming up fast or Bust.

Albert Rackstand (Nom de plume)
Lymm, Cheshire

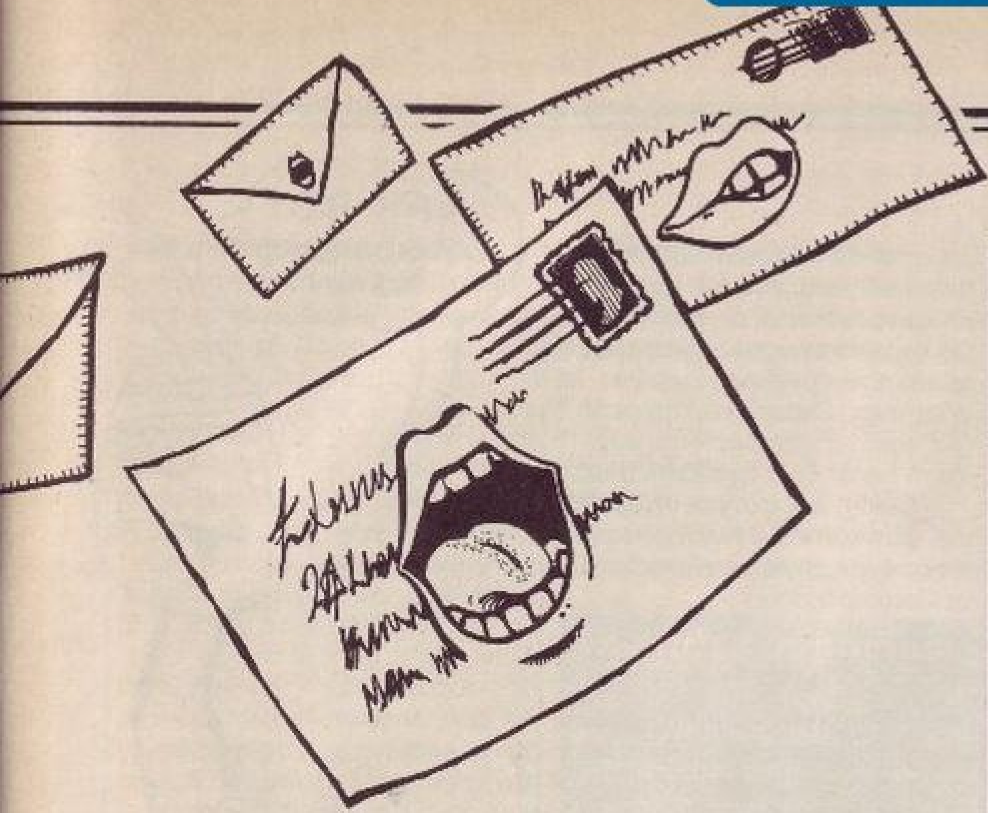
The software market certainly is fast-moving: you can't really expect a game of 1983 to bear comparison with a game from 1985, and you can't really be surprised if a game you bought six months ago and have played a lot no longer interests you. On the good side, you are absolutely right, Mr Nom de Plume – Amstrad software gets better and better.

Poke plea

I really like your reviews, and especially Cheat Mode. Could you please enlighten me on how people find out how to cheat games by entering pokes to give them infinite lives etc.? How do you know which kinds of pokes to use, how to enter them, and how to know what the pokes do when they have been entered?

Jason Stanway
Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent

There's a piece in Cheat Mode this month explaining which of two methods to use when entering pokes – it should make life a bit easier for you. Unfortunately, there's no easy way to learn how to poke games. A certain amount of hacking is necessary, as well as a certain amount of knowledge of machine code. Then you need a disassembler to take the program to pieces and find the relevant sections.



Sherbert fountains

Many congratulations on producing a lively, friendly magazine – must be all that Somerset air (or cider).

Your Good News/Bad News summaries are very useful but your reviews (e.g. on word processors) are too short. Could you write an article giving the features to be found om word processors, and an indication of which programs have these features, possibly using a table?

Another plea, for those 'older' readers who have young children – could you review educational programs? I suggest you equip your reviewers with lollipops and sherbert fountains to put them in the right mood.

David Griffiths
Nottingham

Yes, it's probably the cider. Another article on word processing is in the offing, as is an article covering educational software. But we don't really need stimulants to put us in a childish mood.

KENNETH FEE, DUNDEE.
HIC
CIDER

Advertising standards

I am fed up with seeing ads stating that games are available on the Amstrad months before release. For example, *Hypersports*. This game was advertised in the three June issues of certain magazines that I bought. Other games fall under this category – *Supertest*, *Streethawk*.

Emmet Masterson & Daniel Riley
Sidcup

Companies like to put out what they call 'teasers' to whet your appetites. But sometimes they do advertise games so far ahead that you're likely to have lost interest by the time they're actually released. On the other hand, most companies expect their games to be available soon after advertising them – unfortunately, lots of problems can crop up in the developement of a game, and it's usually this that causes the delays.

A trusting soul

I first read your magazine when I chose it in preference to 'the official publication'. I was not disappointed. I subscribed to *Matchday* and *Hypersports*, but have not yet received them, but I trust you! (1000's wouldn't!) Please print all screen shots of 'AA raves' in colour! and I object to Gareth Knight's suggestion of plain brown envelopes – He should be proud of his Amstrad. However, living 'oop North it's

frank on them.

Really Bad

First a bouquet, then a brickbat.

My son is thrilled with you excellent mag, stating that it is 'really bad', which translated into big people's talk means really good, and is worth every penny he screwed out of me.

Now the brickbat. I ordered two of the special offer tapes when I sent off my subscription after the trial issue of the mag No 0. The mag drops through the letterbox, good as gold, but so far no tapes, which by the way were *Matchday* and *Hypersports*. I would be grateful for a Sherlock Holmes investigation into this lapse.

Mr D Foster
London SE19

Are you sure you've got the right magazine Mr. Foster? As far as I remember we didn't produce anything as strange as a 'trial issue 0'. We did though, offer the two games you mention. I won't apologise here – you'll find that on the Ed-Lines pages – but I will say that the Hypersports debacle has caused everyone a lot of grief – to ourselves and Imagine as well as to subscribers. If we could afford to employ S.Holmes we'd have him on the case like a shot.

Brill, fab, great

I have read through the last 3 issues with great enthusiasm as I have yet not got my super Amstrad. Your reviews are very much influencing my choice of games and as I have heard how good *Beachhead* and *Raid* are, I have written to your Christmas subscription offer. And finally I would like to finish off with these last few words: Brill, fab, great, keep up the good work. Yours enjoying the mag,

Jeffrey Hewitt
Castleford, West Yorks

664 Dodo

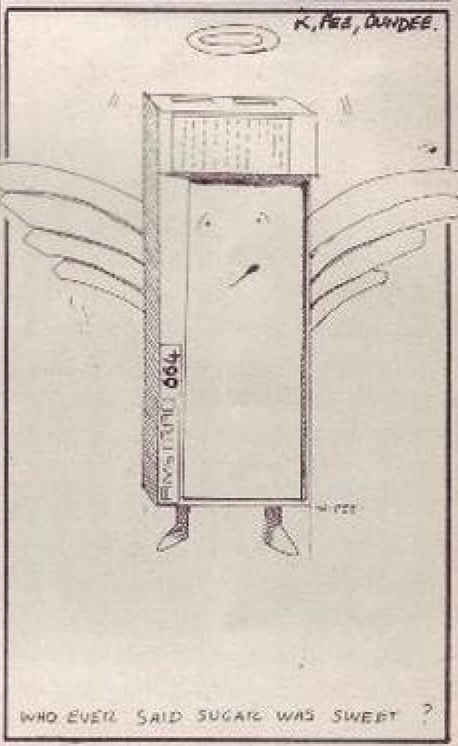
Please do not say 'Oh no, not another letter slamming Amstrad' – even though it is. Amstrad MUST, at every chance, be reminded of the sudden change from a computer to a dodo so that they do not make the same damning mistake twice.

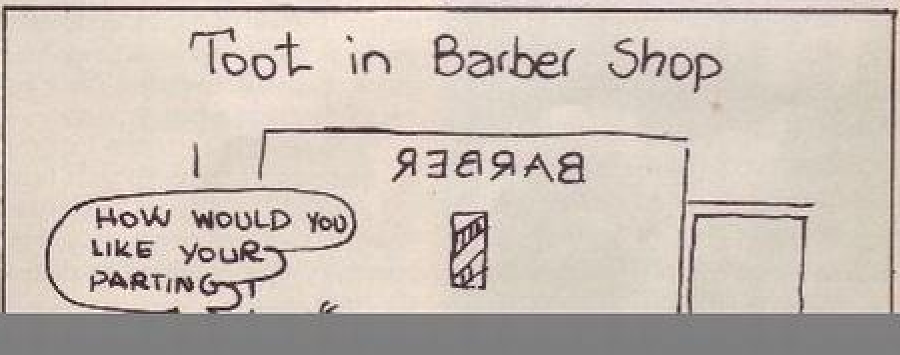
Everyone has 'slagged' them off for this and they have done nothing about it. So I will put an idea forward, and see if they will consider it. How about offering a 'trade-in' for those stuck with the dodo who want to upgrade?

It seems a pity for a company that has brought out great computers to let itself down in this way. Come on Amstrad, you can do better!

Keith Patient
London E17

I'm sure a lot of people have thought about trade-ins – but Amstrad don't seem to be interested. Perhaps the new DK Tronics expansions will help?


K, FEE, DUNDEE.
AMSTRAD 664
WHO EVER SAID SUGAR WAS SWEET ?


Toot in Barber Shop
BARBER
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR PARTING

Transferring *Kung Fu* to disc

I do not know whether this letter should be addressed to ReAction or Cheat Mode! I refer to the free Christmas tape with issue 4.

Having played both games I found *Kung Fu* had the bigger 'Grab factor' but, sadly, with the same old problem – it wouldn't transfer to disc.

I could understand the need for protection if it was being sold, but when it's free... I half expected to find conversion details somewhere in the mag!!

Here is one method of transferring *Kung Fu* to disc:

1. Place disc in drive and ensure it has at least 40K free.
2. Place *Kung Fu* in datacorder.
3. Type in and RUN the following program:

```
10 MEMORY 4999
20 |TAPE.IN
30 LOAD"!LOADER1"
40 CALL &88B8,
50 SAVE"FUSCREEN",B,&88B8,&1178
60 LOAD"!LOADER2"
70 SAVE"LOADER2",B,&88B8,&32
80 POKE &88C3,&C9
90 CALL &88B8
100 SAVE"KUNGFU",B,&1388,&7530
```

This will automatically transfer all the required parts of *Kung Fu* to disc.

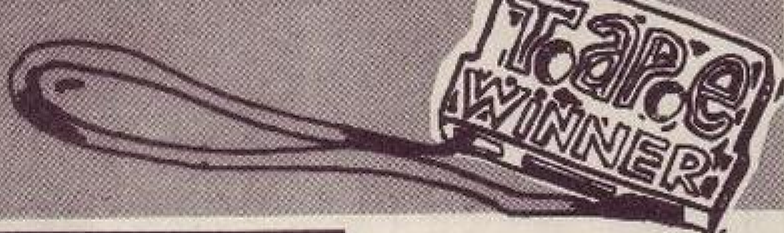
4. Now type in the following porgram and save it as "KUNGFU":

```
10 MODE 1:INK 1,24:INK 2,24
20 MEMORY 16503
30 LOAD"FUSCREEN.BIN", 16504
40 CALL 16504
50 MEMORY 4999
60 LOAD"LOADER2.BIN"
70 LOAD"KUNGFU.BIN"
80 CALL &88C3
```

My thanks to Steve Thomas of Pride Utilities for his help.

Brian Barton
Hatfield

Our thanks to you for doing what we should have done ourselves in the Christmas issue. As a reward you win – a tape!



A hoot for Toot

Many thanks for a fine mag, and please find enclosed a cheque for a year's subscription.

Please keep all your present good features eg. a minimal amount of listings, the cartoon character Toot who wanders around the pages, articles like *Machine Code Cracked* (in No.3) that actually gave you some idea of where to go next. Please retain that feature in any future "how to do it" articles.

I would like to see as much review space for hardware and "serious" software as there is for games. Particularly comparative reviews of say, compilers, printers, rom boards, in the same manner as your word processor review in No.3.

Norris Riley
Guildford, Surrey

Serious software is going to get more of a look in this year – but not at the expense of anything else. We're just going to make the mag bigger.

Weekly wish

I enjoy your wonderfully refreshing magazine so much that I wish it would come out weekly instead of monthly!

My favourite section is ReAction where I read all the varied, amusing and totally interesting views of other Amstrad users. A big congratulations AA, as the "New Kid in Town", you've certainly made a big impact.

I have only recently caught the computer bug and plan to buy the Amstrad 464 this Christmas. Thanks to your great mag I'm now fully satisfied that I've made the right choice.

As a novice I really can't think of any suggestions for your mag. As far as I'm concerned you've got a very interesting and informative magazine that spells success in capital letters! I just hope this won't give you a big head and jack up the price!

I know it's rather late to send in the AA questionnaire which appeared in your first issue but I thought you might still want to know what your readers think about your magazine. So please find enclosed the AA questionnaire to which I've completed. Oh by the way, ignore those jibes about the spelling mistakes in your mag. Even *The Times* can't get them right sometimes!!! (I know because I read *The Times*.)

Lastly, AA, can you enlighten me why software for Amstrad is more expensive than Spectrum's or Commodore's?

Ronny Sin
King's Lynn

Weekly?! Do you want to drive us to a premature collective grave? It's only the massive doses of local scrumpy that keep us going producing a monthly. Weekly? The mind boggles.

Disheartened

I am a disheartened Speccie owner, dog sick of the pitiful 'Beep' sounds and the ugly graphics. Recently I have observed all the home computers on the market, and without a doubt think that the Amstrad was the best for the money and other aspects.

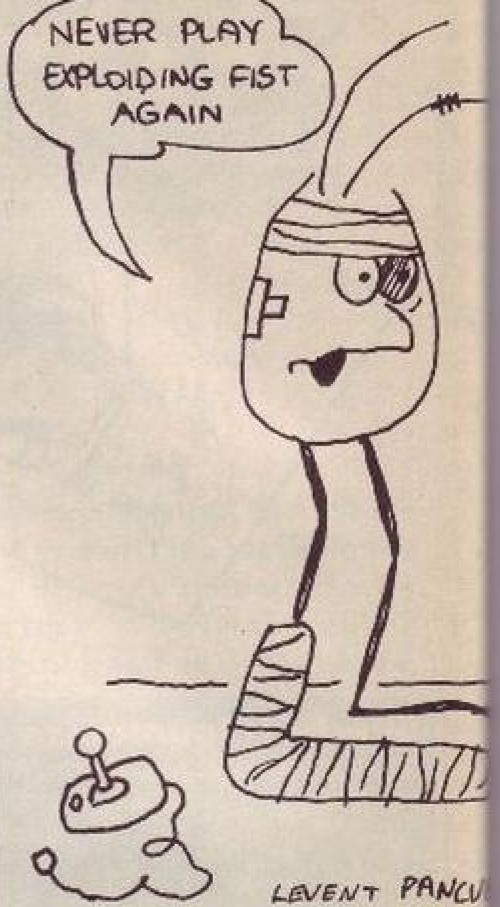
The problem is , though, I haven't much money. All I want to buy is the CPC464, with a modulator to fit the telly, but with no monitor. I understand it can be bought on the market without a monitor, but I don't know where. Seeing AA I saw the ideal opportunity to ask you and your readers for any ideas to help my current situation. I want to spend around £150 but haven't seen what I want in the shops as yet.

If Amstrad owners have knowledge of my crisis, maybe they can write in.

Stephen Penn
Ramsgate

We don't know of anywhere you can buy the computer without the monitor, but the 464 with green screen costs only £199. The TV modulator is £14.95, so maybe you'll be able to find the extra 50 quid from someone. Parents are generally a good bet.

WANTED
Monitor to go to good home.
reasonable price offered


NEVER PLAY EXPLODING FIST AGAIN
LEVENT PANCU

A meaningless life

Having just bought my first computer at 26 – a CPC464 and DD1 – I tried all the available magazines I could find. Seven at the last count – or is it eight? No matter. I think I can honestly say that of them all yours appealed to me most. Being totally ignorant of *computerese* it was nice to find a mag that didn't expect you to know it all, and yet still accepted that you were not totally dim!

I do have a few groans, however:

1. High Score is a bit of a farce. I thought it was interesting at first for comparison. But the errors do seem to have crept in here. Obviously some of the scores can be taken with a pinch of salt. Still, I'm sure that some of them are legit.
2. In Issue 4 you refer to transferring from tape to disc and how you think that this is the shape of things to come etc. Very good. But – why didn't you provide some means of achieving this with the free cassette you give with that issue!
3. The most important groan of all. You have ruined the main purpose in my life!! I bought *Nonterraqueous* about four weeks ago, and for three weeks got absolutely nowhere. The first force field really stumped me and I spent many sleepless nights wondering. And then – Eureka! One night was particularly sleepless – big meeting next day, big boss etc., – anda as diversion my mind wandered to *Nonterra*. I was convinced that the answer was obvious, so at about 3.30 a.m. on Tuesday I finally fell in and realised that the little thing in one of the

Masterpiece

I would like to congratulate you on your mag. To me it is the masterpiece of mags. I say this because of the way in which you preview the software. I think you have taken plenty of time in going through it in great detail. Well I would like to think that your mag will go a long way, especially with Arnold owners here in Northern Ireland, because I think it is about time someone got off their backside and produced a really good mag, not like that boring load of rubbish that we seem to get put in our laps every month. Well thanks to you that has all come to an end and from now on I can look forward to your mag. And by the way your AA ratings are a brilliant idea. So keep up the good work because I'm sure us Arnold owners here in Northern Ireland would much appreciate it to the full.

Eric Bingham
Belfast

rooms was not a hammer, but was in fact a bomb! Since then I've had many mishaps but have succeeded in mapping over 150 rooms.

But – Shock! Horror! Not only do you print a complete map in Issue 4, but you also print a poke so that an untrained monkey can finish the game! I was also working on *Soul of a Robot* – dang! And my third game in progress was *Starion*. I've only reached grid 2, and what do you do?

Despite this criticism I find the inclusion of maps within your pages quite rewarding. Mind you, I haven't got *Marsport* and if your map's anything to go by I don't think I'll bother – I can't understand it at all!

I was going to apply for the job but I don't know what a 'boffin' is. Gosh, these technical terms always catch me out.

J.C. Savory
Northampton

Sorry to have deprived your life of its meaning, Mr. Savory. Perhaps the tape you'll get for us printing your letter will give you another purpose. We take the point that maps can sometimes make it difficult when you're determined to crack a game on your own. On the whole, though, people seem to appreciate the help they give.

Tape WINNER

Whole lotta love

Love your magazine – love your style – love your offers!! Love your editor! Love you all!!

Keep up the good work – what enjoyment I get from Amstrad Action!

Betty Ware
Dorset

Love you too Betty!

The price of games

The first software I bought when I got my Amstrad 464 was Mastertronic's *Nonterraqueous and Soul of a Robot*. Both are marvellous, although frustrating. At £1.99 they are amazing value for money, but how can other companies justify £9-10 for their software? Particularly Amsoft with drivel like *Bridge-It* and most of the other software in its pack. Granted they are free, but they also sell them (see Autumn catalogue).

I know there are costs in producing software – duplication, packaging etc., but the prices are still too high. How can record companies produce music cassettes for £6 when you consider their costs? Two months in expensive recording studios, producers, engineers and countless other things. Music cassettes are duplicated in roughly the same quantities as software and sell roughly the same numbers – if not less in the case of lesser groups. So come on – cut prices!

Declan Kennedy
Armagh, N.Ireland

I agree that much software is horribly overpriced. But I think your analogy with music cassettes is a bit wide of the mark – they sell many more copies than games and so bring in much more money.

Sarcastic masochist

Boy is your mag untidy! Your games reviews seem to be slapped onto the pages with no thought given to proper formatting. Some of the illustrations could have been done by my pet piranha, Bronson, with one pectoral fin tied behind his back.

All this means that I'm a masochist for sure; cos I like it. It gives the mag a feeling of having been created by fellow enthusiasts for the sake of sharing that enthusiasm, and not primarily to bring in the profits. Maybe it's due to your relative youth and maybe it's due to the country bumpkin mentality, but I hope you won't lose this easy-going quality you inject into AA.

One thing that makes me gnash my teeth in annoyance is slagging off of other micros. It's not only the letter-writers, but your reviewers are doing it too! Enough, I say! As an owner of a 48K Speccy as well as an Arnold, I can tell you that they get on well with each other. Each micro has a virtue that is lacking in the other, and I'm sure that is true of other computers. Let's have no more micro-bashing. It's not their fault if they're trash compared to Arnold.

The listings are definitely a bonus, especially if they're to be utilities. It's a shame to waste Arnold's potential as a teacher of logical thinking and programming by just playing games on him. Amsoft have made Arnold's memory more accessible to us users, so why not delve into it with some m/c progs and tame him?

Enough rambling. In your November issue you asked for cartoons. Here's one from me, enclosed, revealing Mr Sugar's secret identity. Well, with all he has achieved, you didn't think he was an ordinary man did you?

Good mag, team. Long may it flourish.

S. Sarkar
London, E11

There are a few things the art boys round here could think of to do with that ridiculously-named piranha of yours. The only reason we're letting you escape with your life is because we liked your cartoon strip. Bronson obviously used two pectoral fins when he drew it. But remember – rile a 'country bumpkin' too much and he turns very nasty indeed.

GREAT CARTOON!

Good news, Bad news

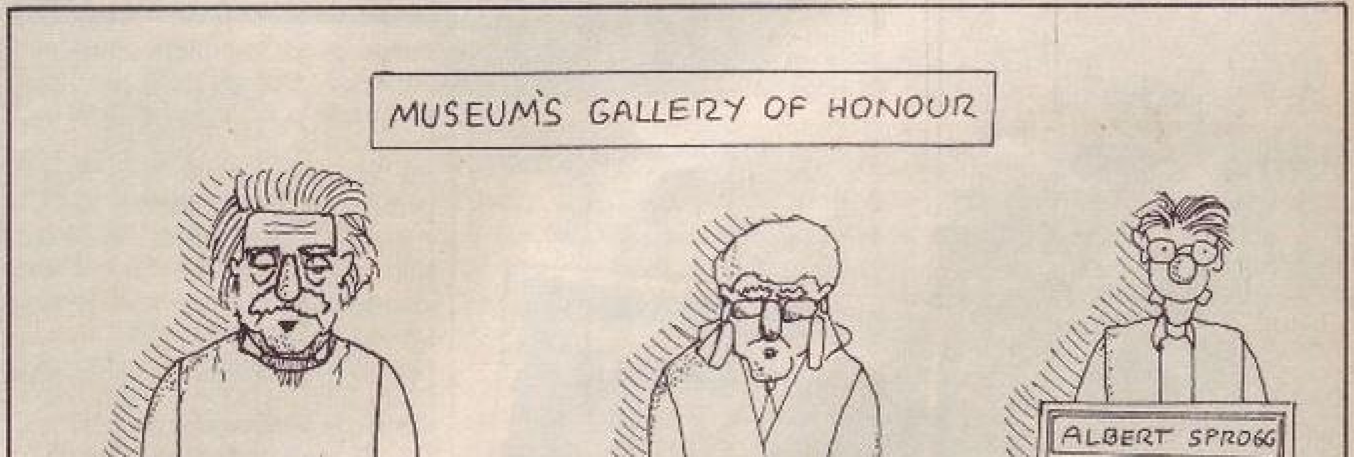
Good News: your magazine is very enjoyable – almost as good as the Amstrad computer.

Bad News: the companies who advertise with you are awful. I sent off several requests for lists, especially for educational software – to date several weeks later only one has replied. Well, two actually, but Shekhana did request a SAE. So full marks to LCL educational software – what a pity only one cassette is for Arnold at a princely sum of £24!!

Please could you remind these other companies that not replying quickly to requests will lose them orders.

Mrs Adams
Sevenoaks, Kent

It's a bit of a job trying to find good educational software at the moment. We hope to do a survey of what's available in a future issue. As for companies not replying, well – would anyone like to reply to this letter?


MUSEUM'S GALLERY OF HONOUR
ALBERT EINSTEIN
THEORY OF RELATIVITY
LAFAYETTE
DECLARATON OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN
ALBERT SPROGG
INTERPRETER OF AMSOFT'S PRICING POLICY
K-FEE

PSS's French Connection

PSS seem to be putting a lot of their *oeufs* in the French basket these days. After the success of pinball game *Macadam Bumper* they have now taken the UK rights for three more games from French software house Ere Informatique.

And *trés chaud* these games are, too, according to PSS director Gary Mays. One of them, says Gary, 'has graphics that make Ultimate's stuff look really boring.' The game is a 3D arcade adventure set in a prison in which our hero – the punk/teddy boy from *Macadam Bumper* – has to rescue his girlfriend. It's as yet unclear quite why she is in the prison in the first place. The game is called *Eden Blues* at the moment, but this is certain to be changed before release.

Another of the French three likely to be rechristened before release in the UK is *Grafton*, which is another arcade adventure, taking place this time in a hospital. The graphics are 'of true cartoon quality' says Gary.

Contamination is the only one likely to keep its original title. It's a strategy/arcade game called which places you in control of the World Health Organisation and its efforts to maintain world population levels in the face of a multitude of nasty viruses, plagues etc. At your disposal you have doctors and various antibodies and drugs.

All three games should be available by late January, preceded by home-grown offerings *Falklands War* and *Swords and Sorcery*. Zut alors! Could this be the year of PSS?

Amstrad *Animator*

The Animator is the first product from a new company, Woolf Graphics, and will be released at the Amstrad Show in London on January 11th.

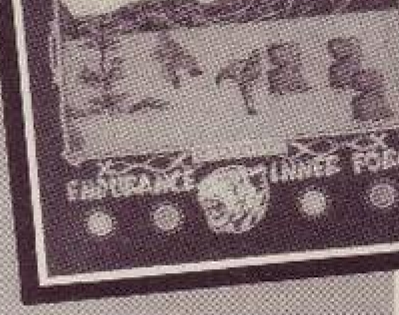
The program is described as 'a fully-fledged animation package' which will allow almost instant creation of cartoons. The idea is that you draw two pictures – *key frames* – and the program then generates the frames in between, displaying them at up to 25 frames per second.

Pictures can occupy all, or part, of the screen. The screen compaction techniques used can, it is claimed, allow a detailed cartoon to stretch over hundreds of frames. More complicated animation sequences can be drawn by inserting more key frames. Other options in the program include standard or stippled clour fill, polygon drawing, frame rotation, and a choice of graphics Modes 1 or 2. Animation speed can be varied, the cartoon can be replayed backwards and there is even a freeze-frame facility.

The Animator is written by Richard Taylor, the ex-whizz kid who brought hi-res graphics to the ZX 81 and later wrote *Fifth*, a graphics programming language for the Spectrum. *The Animator* costs £8.95 on cassette and £13.95 on disc, and is available for the 464, 664 and 6128. Woolf Graphics can be contacted at 8 Sterndale Rd, London W14 0HS, ☎01-603-4064.

Gremlin's tiger in the works

Gremlin are releasing a series of text and arcade adventures based on the fighting fantasy books, *The Way of the Tiger*. The series is based around a character who appears to be of royal birth but has yet to fulfil his destiny.



The first in the series is your training in the martial arts. There are three skills: unarmed combat, pole fighting and samurai sword fighting. Each of these skills is a game in its own right which has to be loaded separately. This latest in the martial arts and combat games will cost £9.95 on cassette.

AMSCEN

Code name – 6256?

Is this the code name of the next Amstrad computer? Rumours in the industry are rife that Amstrad will launch an IBM PC compatible machine in the next few months – for around £500. With their customary reticence Amstrad are neither confirming nor denying the rumours. The most we could get from an Amstrad spokesman was 'the usual "no comment"'.

But as one manufacturer of Amstrad peripherals put it: 'There must be some truth in the rumours. There's no smoke without fire.' A further whisper suggests that Amstrad have paid Digital Research a figure in the region of $400,000 for the *Dos-plus* operating system to run the new machine.

But +DR's UK boss, Paul Bailey, would not confirm that his company ws working on a project for Amstrad: 'I can't confirm that at all', he said. 'In fact, I'm denying it.'

If Amstrad do launch the rumoured machine, it's likely to set the cat among the pigeons. IBM clones don't come much cheaper than £1,000 at the moment. A machine for half that price will surely clean up.

As far as the home user is concerned, the machine will probably be a little on the serious side to be of much interest. The IBM PC is not renowned for its games or leisure software.

★ ★ ★ ★

All change at ACU?

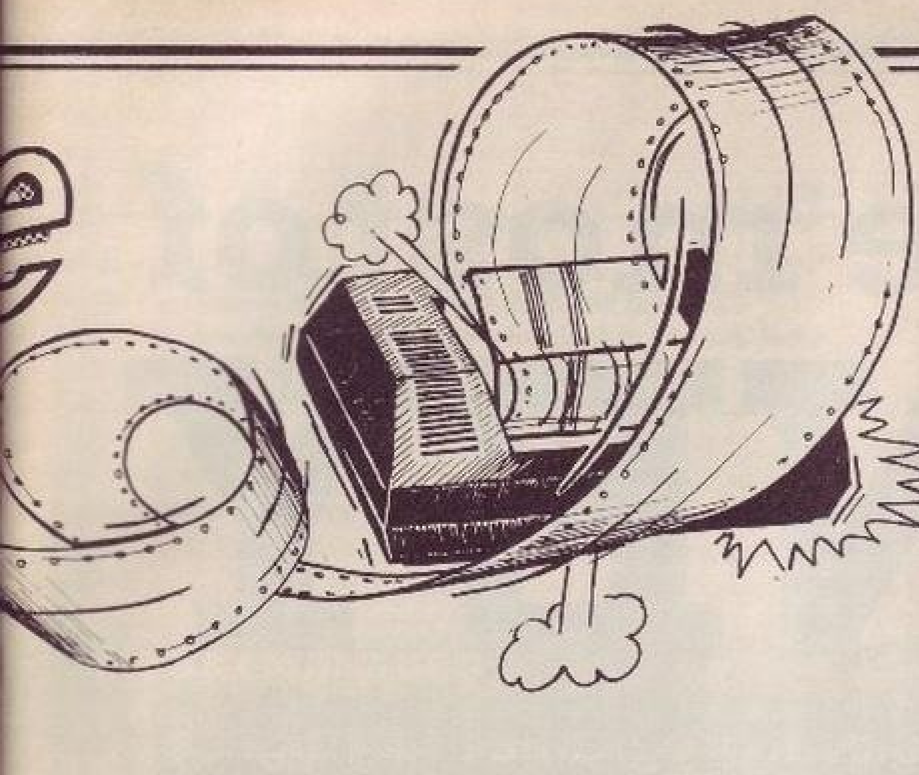
Interesting developments at Amstrad Computer User, the magazine published by Amstrad themselves. Or should that read the magazine which *used* to be published by Amstrad.

As we go to press, it appears that the magazine has been bought by a company closely linked to Database Publications, the people behind a rivalmagazine, Computing with the Amstrad. However Database's Derek Meakin denied that a sale had been finalised and another Database spokesman said: 'We haven't actually bought the magazine – it's just that we'll be working more closely with them from now on.'

The plan appears to be to continue publishing both magazines in their existing locations with the same editorial teams. ACU has been up for sale for some time, and Database are thought by some insiders to have made their bid to prevent another major publisher entering the Amstrad magazine market.

Alan and Joyce nominated

But not for Oscars. Alan Sugar and the PCW 8256 have both been nominated for RITA (Recognition of Information Technology Achievements) awards. Alan Sugar has been shortlisted for the personality of the yea
while the 8256 is in the running fo
business computer system of th
year. Keep an eye on the BBC
show *Microlive* for the results
mid-January. Will the dynam
duo get the recognition they d
serve? The suspense is killing u



Golden disc delight

Amsoft are continuing their drive towards disk based games with three new releases, two available solely on disk and one an enhanced version. The new games are *Tank Command* and *Golden Path* with *Doors of Doom* getting the overdrive.

Tank Command is set on a 16 screen map comprised of all sorts of rough terrain and obstacles. You drive a Sherman tank and have to rescue 16 men from the hostile territory. Many dangers lie in wait including tanks, traps and gun positions. The enhanced version of *Doors of Doom* has four levels instead of the one on the tape version, making a much larger and even more impressive game.

All the disc versions are released under the Amsoft Gold label and cost £13.95. They look like the start of a new breed of disc-only games – which should delight all disc owners and turn poor cassette owners green with envy.

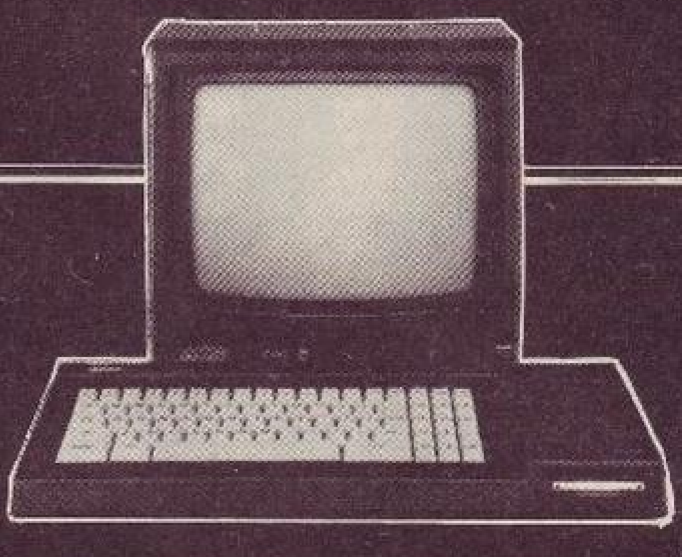
A New Star called Delta

A database package for the PCW 8256, called *Delta*, is being released by New Star, the company set up by William Poel (formerly of *Amsoft* and *Amstrad User*). The package sells for only £99 and considering the IBM PC version costs £569 it looks like a pretty good deal.

The package has nationwide training support because of its existence on other machines but will be best used by a two disk system. The second disk drive for the 8256 is now available and costs £159 although many future programs will also benefit from the two drive system.

Also out from New Star is the *New Word* wordprocessor which sells for £69.00 for the 8256 and 6128 and, amongst other things, has a 45,000 word spelling checker and many features not included in Lococript.

MSDOS for 6128



An MSDOS add-on board giving the CPC6128 full 16 bit IBM comaptibility will be available by March. The board, from Screen Micro, will slot into the back of the 6128 and should cost around £299. Visitors to the Amstrad Show at the beginning of January will be able to see it there.

The board has been developed by German comapny Vortex, along with a multitude of other add-ons for the Amstrad family. Nigel Sinclair of Screen Micros says that the IBM board 'will bridge the gap once and for all between home and business micros.' He expects the main demand to be from businessmen with IBMs in the office who might now be able to use their software on home Amstrads. At £299 the board is pricey for the average owner, while IBM software doesn't come cheap either – yet.

Screen Micro's other products, though, should be much more attractive to owners of all three Amstrads. **Expansion boards** begin at £99 for 64K, rising to £159 for 512K. Unlike the DK Tronics add-ons, these boards are fitted internally.

Disc drives: Vortex have produced both 3.5 inch and 5.25 minch drives to run wiht the Amstrads. The 5.25 inch version will be a dual drive with full CPM 2.2 and Amsdos compatibility. 6128 owners are to be offered a 10 mega-byte hard disc for under £400.

On the software side Screen Micro are launching a suite of programs called *Personal Assistant* containing six programs and retailing at £79. Included is the word processor *Wordmate*, an 80 column program with, it is claimed, 'nearly all the functions of *WordStar*, without the complexity'. The other modules will be a database, mailing system, accounts programs and an invoice generator. Future modules will be *Spellmate*, *Spreadmate* and *Accountmate*, titles which should self-explanatory.

AA will be bringing you full details and reviews of the hardware and software as it becomes available.

Domark spill blood

Domark have two releases set to spill a fair amount of blood on your Amstrad. The most graphically advertised is *Friday the 13th*, based on the film but not featuring the gory scenes from it where a psychopath in a hockey mask delights in killing people.

That arcade adventure is joined by a title called *Gladiator*, yet another combat game. Many more weapons are available than in other games with three being usable at once by your character – who can also perform 25 different moves. *Friday the 13th* is available at £8.95 on cassette and *Gladiator* at £7.95 on cassette.

Yabba dabba do

That lovable stone-age cartoon character Fred Flintstone is all set to make a rock-bashing computer debut in a quest for the love of Wilma. His task is to build a house out of stones from the local quarry and woo Wilma into joining him. The game is being released by Quicksilva/Argus Press who say it is "graphically superb". It sells for £7.95 on cassette.

There is a competition run in conjunction with the game to win two tickets to Los Angeles to visit the Hanna Barbera studios, where the Flintstones is made, and Disneyland.

Making the most of MONEY

The inimitable Bertram Carrot looks at programs that might help you manage you finances better in '86 than you did in '85

'Ye Gods, not another bill! I thought I paid that last month'. If that sort of anguished exclamation sounds all too familar, perhaps you ought to consider a home accounts package. What these noble programs try to do is to instil discipline into those who'd rather note down all their financial transactions on the back of a chocolate wrapper. If you feel you have the necessary determination to enter each and every standing order, cheque and payment received, then a home accounts program will analyse, display, print-out and draw graphs of where the pounds go.

Two examples of the genre are considered here. They both offer roughly the same facilities, with *Money Manager* adding pie charts to the standard repertoire, and *Home Accounts* coming up with budgeting information and the facility to compare estimated with actual figures. So which of the two will best recoup its asking price and earn your undying gratitude?

HOME ACCOUNTS

Gemini Marketing, £19.95 cass, £25.95 disc
Amstrad 464, 664, 6128

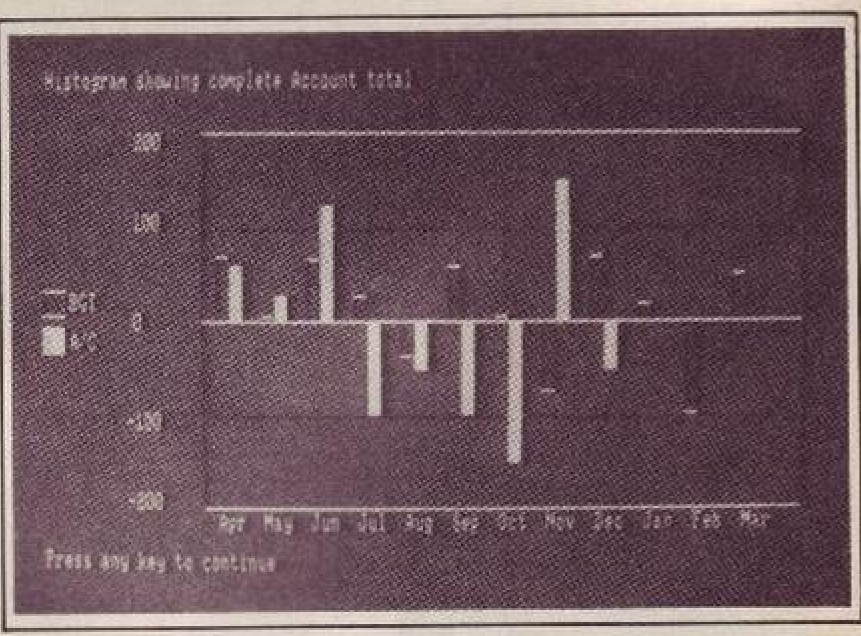
Gemini's *Home Accounts* package consists of two programs, sensibly labelled *HA1* and *HA2*. *HA1* is used to set up your accounts, and to display or print out balance sheets and other summaries. You start by entering the date in the form DD/MM/YY (although the manual advises DD followed by the first three letters of the month), and the account name. Once into the program, the main menu offers eight options. These don't include exit, so to leave the program its down to a hard reset – don't forget to save your data beforehand. The options are:

1 Budget or account summary
2 Complete summary
3 Amend minimum balance
4 Amend, Add or Delete allocations
5 Amend budgeted amounts
6 Histograms
7 New account
8 Save data

Home Accounts allows you to enter budget estimates in a number of different allocation categories. You can later assess how you've done in meeting your predictions. Eight allocation headings are provided in a sample data file, but you can create up to 20 of your own instead. You can change the heading for an allocation, but only if no money has been allocated to it. The sample print-outs from the program show the supplied allocation headings, plus one important ommission.

Once you've set up the allocation headings, you'll need to load *HA2* to enter your day to day transactions. Each sum of money coming into your bank account or going out to pay for goods or services is labelled with a date, transaction number, description and amount. You enter each transaction individually, but can then display them by period or allocation heading. You can also display the budgeted and actual amounts to compare the two.

Another nice feature of the Gemini program is its built-in early warning of bank charges. With banks dithering around, not knowing whether to charge for accounts or not, it's useful to be able to predict months where you're likely to get clobbered. *Home Accounts* allows you to set the threshold for bank charges, and will then report in budget and account summaries if you're likely to be charged.


Histogram showing complete Account total
200
100
BGT
0
A/C
-100
-200
Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar

Press any key to continue

The program normally works in mode 1 – 40 column – so anybody using a colour monitor should be able to read what's going on. An option for an 80 column print-out is provided for most of the tables the program can produce, or you can direct the output to a mode 2 – 80 column – screen instead. If you believe a picture is worth a thousand words, then a bar chart should be good for a for a few hundred digits. The Gemini package can produce these on command, showing positive and negative-going bars, but there's no facility to print them out.

Its hard to fault a package which does what it sets out to do in a professional way. It would be nice, though, to have an exit option from the main menu which would automatically save your data, and to have the <ESC> key disabled against accidental resets.

SERIOUS SOFTWARE

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Clearly presented and easy to use.**
- ▶ **Can compare actual and budgeted figures.**
- ▶ **Will predict months when bank charges are due.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **<ESC> key not trapped.**

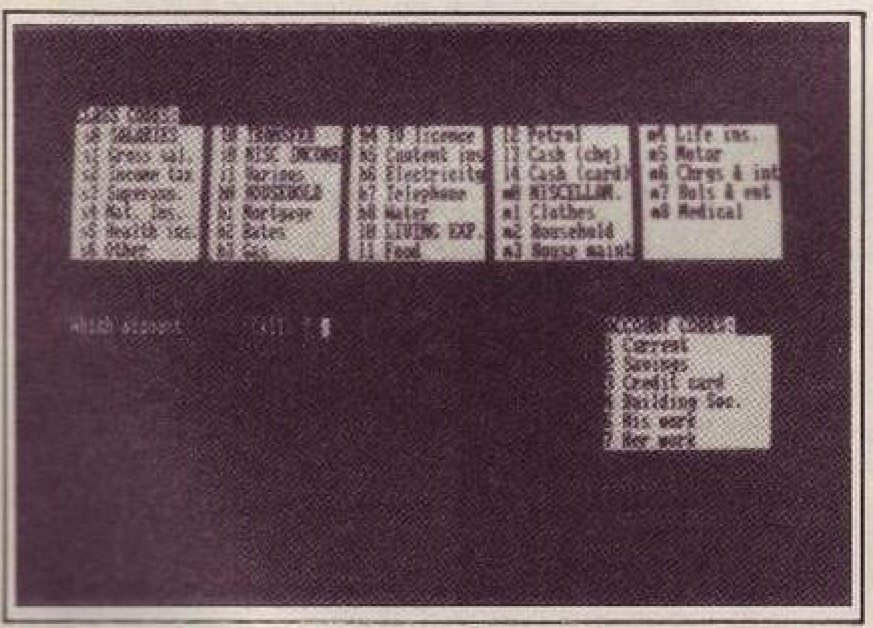
MONEY MANAGER

Connect Systems, £14.95 cass, £17.95 disc
Amstrad 464, 664, 6128

Money Manager takes a different approach from the Gemini system. It also divides its work between two programs, but these devote themselves to entry of transactions, and their analysis. *Money Manager* is particularly strong on analysis and can produce summaries by account, class and mark.

You what? Well, an **account** is one of seven pre-defined categories, covering such things as current, savings, credit card and building society. You may also like to consider your wages or salary as being a payment into an account with your employer. You can rename any of the accounts at will. The account class is a handy sub-division of your expenses. 32 classes are provided, but again you may redefine them. They include salaries, mortgage, gas, food, life insurance, computer games – in fact, most of the essentials of life. You may attach any transaction to one of these classes.

A **mark** is a user-defined flag attached to a transaction and used to pull them all out for analysis. The manual suggests that you might use a mark to distinguish between a husband's and a wife's expenditure – a great way of promoting marital strife. Nonetheless, this three tier system of analysing your expenditure allows you to examine things in great detail.



Entering individual transactions is a straightforward business. You select the appropriate routine from the menu and type in the relevant details. The program gives each transaction a number and you supply a date, account number, reference number, class, description, amount and mark. Only reference, description and mark are optional.

Once you've been using the system for a while, you can call the analysis module to provide statistics on your income and expenditure. The program can display a wide variety of different **statements** comparing expenditure in different categories, classes and time periods, and also calculates maximums, minimums and averages. This it does quite slowly, but then it's not the kind of thing you'll want to do every day of the week. In fact, I wonder how many people will actually want to do it at all!

Money Manager works exclusively in mode 2 – 80 columns – so you need a green screen monitor to do it justice, since its statements make use of the full width of the screen and can look a bit fuzzy on a colour set. On the other hand, the graphic displays the package can produce look rather better in colour, and you can select the two colours.

The program can display multiple bar charts, up to four on the same axes, but oddly it displays them all up the screen, marking negative ones with a minus sign. This takes away some of the benefit of graphing the figures in the first place.

The pie charts are rather better. You can sub-divide your pie into several different segments, and the program marks each with a percentage of the total. Things can get a bit crowded with small sub-divisions drawn next to each other. There's no facility for printing out either form of graph, but any of the statements may be sent to the printer.

Money Manager is a very professional package, so much so that it may put you off if you're one of the chocolate-wrapper brigade. The manual tries to explain things clearly, but the program is perhaps a bit over the top for home accounting. It is certainly very well put together and can provide detailed analysis of your income and outgoings.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Detailed analysis of accounts possible.**
- ▶ **Good use of screen displays and graphics.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **80 column operation is difficult on a colour monitor.**
- ▶ **No budgeting facility.**

The verdict

When all is said and done, how many people have the self-discipline to maintain a complicated database, for that's what both these systems effectively are? Any record system, manual or computerised, is only as good as the information in it. If you're the methodical sort, you may well benefit from either of these two programs. Both of them certainly do the job very well, *Money Manager* being slightly more professional in terminology and appearance. If you're put off by accounting jargon, you might find the Gemini package a bit more friendly.

I rather suspect, though, that the majority of home accounts programs fall into disuse after the initial surge of enthusiasm wears off. The chocolate wrapper may never go out of fashion.

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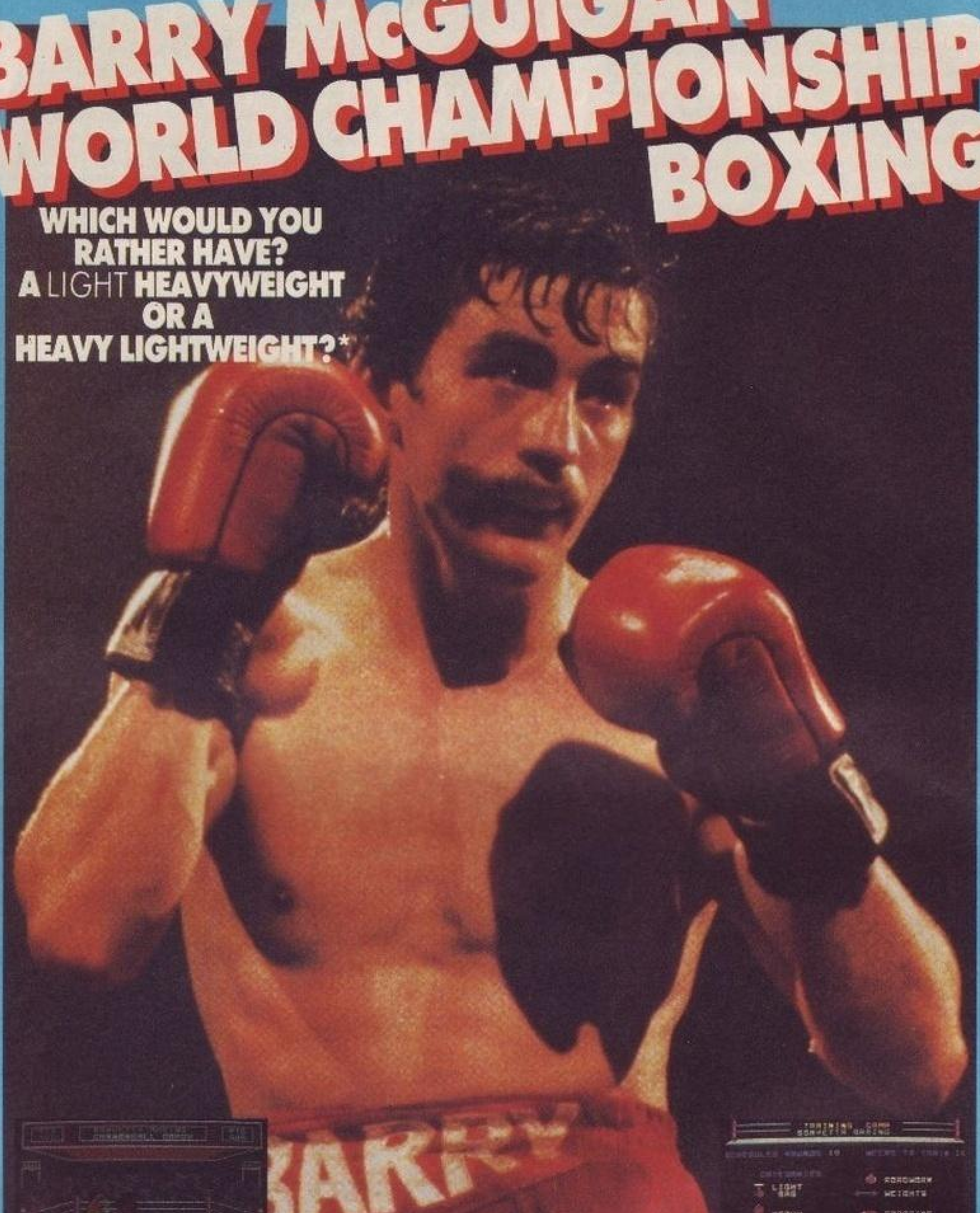

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SERIOUS SOFTWARE

Bertram Carrot – *him* again – weighs up a couple of powerful business accounts packages for the Arnolds.

RJ
ACCOUNTS FOR BEGINNERS
-K-FEE-

CASH BOOK / FINAL ACCOUNTS

Gemini Marketing, £65.95 each, £99.95 together on disc
£59.95 each, £89.95 together on cassette
For CPC464, 664, 6128.

POPULAR ACCOUNTS

Sage Business Software, £99.95
For CPC6128, disc only

The Amstrad is gaining acceptance as a business micro, and several companies are now providing original software or conversions of packages from other machines. And with the large program area available on the 128K machine, there's every reason to convert existing CP/M programs to catch the new market.

Trouble is, CP/M packages and business programs in general are normally stuck with high asking prices, and to sell a piece of software, even a comprehensive product like an accounts suite, you've got to offer your average trucker something special. So do these two come up with the goods?

There are three main areas of business accounts that you might want to computerise: the Sales and Purchase ledgers, the Nominal Ledger and Cashbook, and Final accounts (profit and loss reports, etc). The Gemini suite only covers the first two of these requirements, as it assumes you keep manual Sales and Purchase ledgers. The Sage package integrates all three applications, and is a direct conversion of a package they've marketed for some years on other CP/M micros.

The Sage accounts programs are designed to work with a single drive, and you have to follow the instructions to swap program and ledger discs. This happens pretty frequently and becomes annoying after a while. The Gemini programs run under Amsdos, and the program and data run in memory together. Although you have to change discs or cassettes to run the other module, these swaps are infrequent. Against this ease of use, however, is the fact that the Gemini programs are written in BASIC and the <ESC> key hasn't been disabled!

Both packages are structured similarly as far as their nominal ledgers are concerned, each providing a number of named accounts, to which you 'post' entries from the sales and purchase ledgers. The Gemini nominal ledger has a total of 199 named accounts, of which over 100 are already provided with useful names, such as 'Wife's Wages' and 'Accountancy'; a reminder that you shouldn't forsake the services of a professional just because you've got a computer. The Sage nominal ledger allows up to 999 account names, but doesn't provide any suggestions for naming them, other than a chat with your accountant.

The main advantage of computerised accounts over their manual counterparts is the ease with which you can obtain reports. Not only can you produce monthly balance sheets and profit and loss listings, but you can display or print out budget forecasts and trial balances at the touch of a few keys. Both systems will help keep the VAT man happy by handling your VAT transactions and producing VAT returns automatically.

At the end of the year, you'll need reports of the full year's transactions to hand to your auditor. The Final Accounts module of the Gemini system will produce these for you, while the Sage package copes with them in the same way as it handles the monthly figures.

If you have no accounting training, you'll have to rely on the manuals accompanying each package to help you out. The Sage offering runs to 80 pages, is full of illustrations and is friendly, while still being concise. Gemini offers a separate manual with each program, and they generally assume you know more about accounting. Neither version attempts to teach you book-keeping, but I felt more at home with Sage's explanations.

Either of these systems could help to improve the financial management of a business, but neither can be used without a fair degree of accounting knowledge. You don't have to be a chartered accountant, but you'll certainly need to swot up on some of the terminology. If you're considering switching from manual to computerised accounts, you'll probably know what you're doing, anyway. For my money (sorry) the Sage package has the edge, mainly due to its completely integrated approach.

Gemini Cashbook/ Final Accounts

GOOD NEWS

- ► **Can be bought in two parts if you can't afford it all at once.**
- ► **Provides suggested nominal ledger account names.**

BAD NEWS

- ► **Doesn't include Sales or Purchase Ledgers.**
- ► **Manuals a bit thin.**

Sage Popular Accounts

GOOD NEWS

- ► **Fully integrated accounting system.**
- ► **Produces budgetting information.**
- ► **Decent manual.**

BAD NEWS

- ► **Constant swapping of program and ledger discs slows you down.**
- ► **Won't use a second drive for ledgers.**
- ► **High one-off purchase price?**

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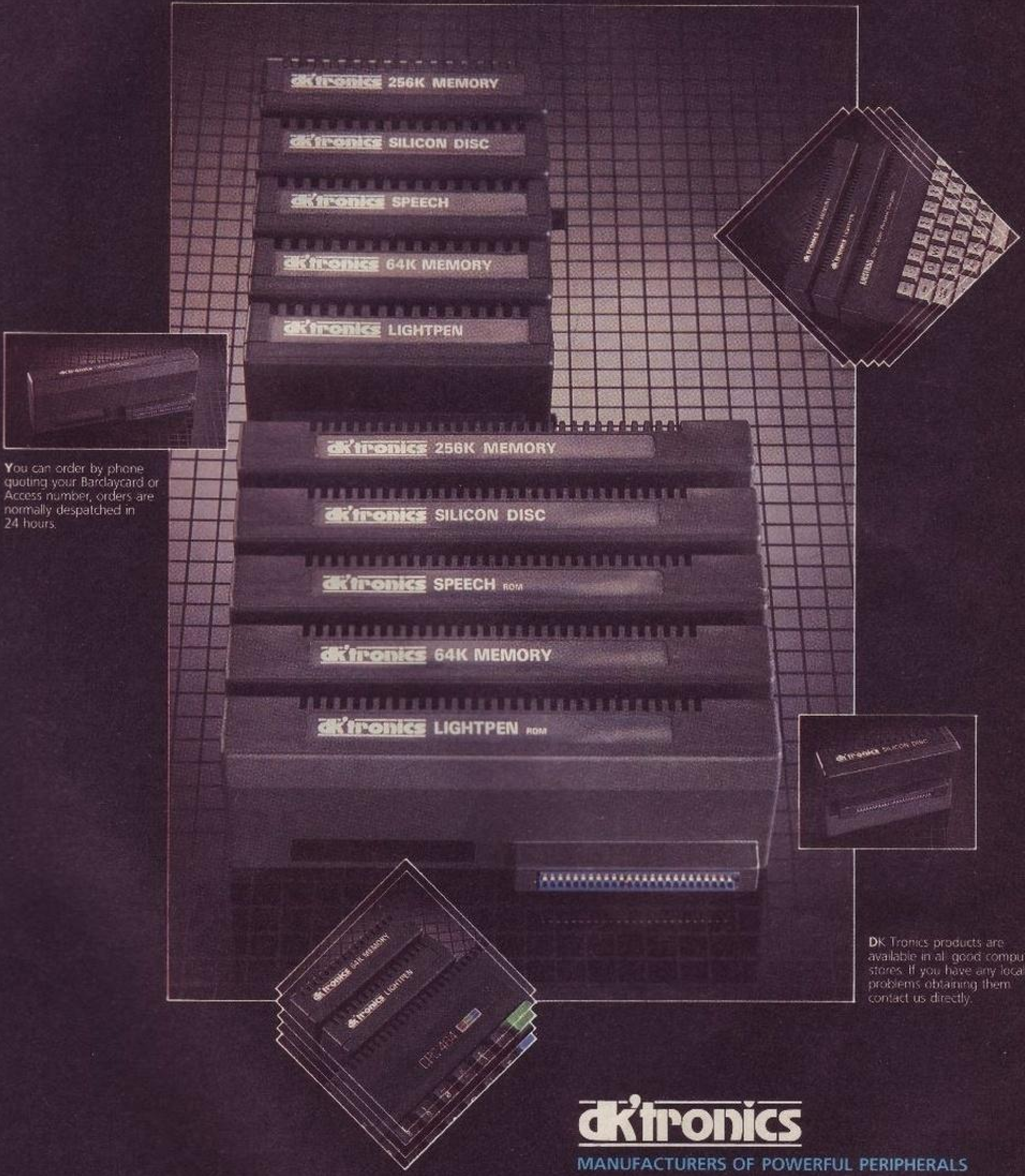
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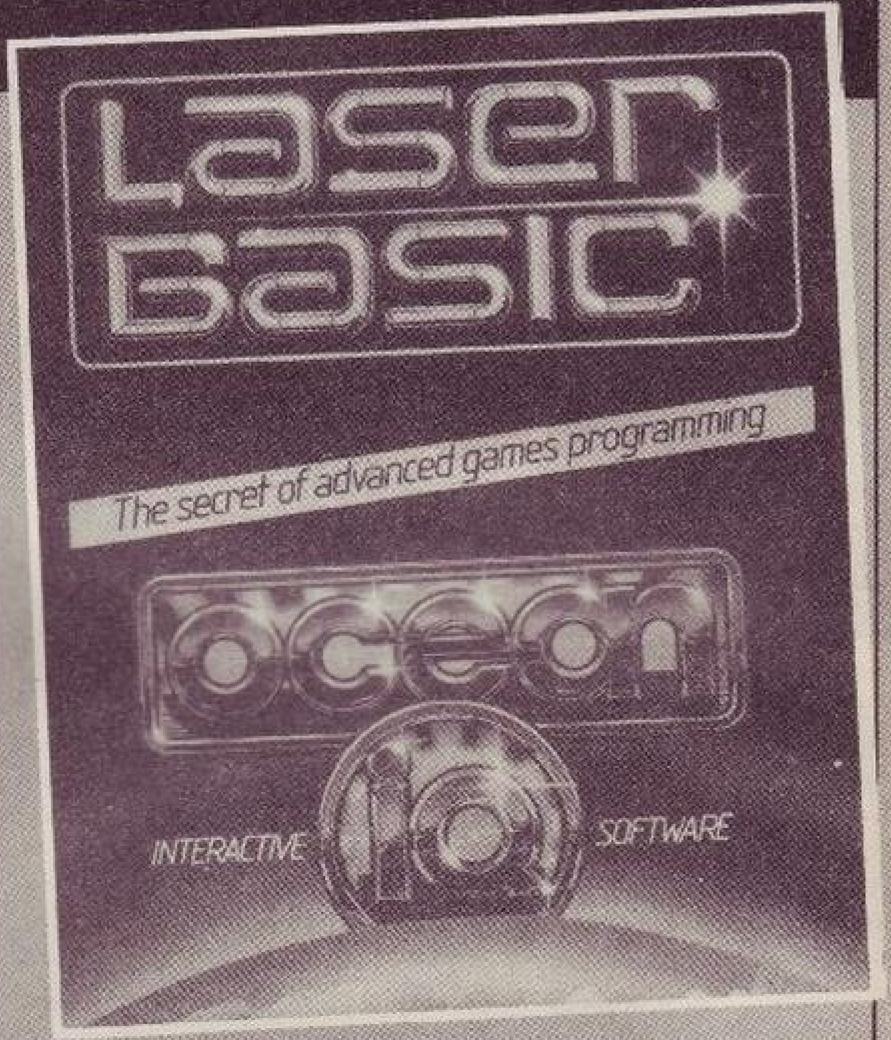
Laser Basic

Steve Cooke gets to grips with Ocean's games-programming utility and finds that there's a lot of clever stuff inside.

The Amstrad computers don't have many drawbacks but they do lack one feature that helped make both the Atari and Commodore 64 computers such popular machines – sprites. Now Ocean have brought out a package that rectifies this important omission. Could it be the most important software release yet for budding Arnold games programmers?

***Sprites*, just in case you didn't know, are those things that move about the screen in Galaxians, Pacman, Defender, Manic Miner, Jet Set Willy – in fact in just about any graphics-based arcade game you care to mention. They can come in all sorts of different shapes and sizes, but actually programming them to do what you want them to do can be a real drain on the grey cells. Well, it used to be – now Ocean's *Laser Basic* will do the whole thing for you.**



What you get

Laser Basic comes in a bulky plastic case that contains two cassettes and a very nicely produced 130+ page manual. The manual is printed on blue paper, which seems a bit odd at first until you realise that Ocean did this deliberately to make photocopying it difficult, if not impossible. In fact, the company make the uncompromising statement at the beginning of the manual that, to discourage piracy, no manuals will be issued to users who write in claiming to have 'lost' them. Since the package is very complex to use, it would certainly be useless without the manual, and that means that if the dog happens to eat it you'll have to go out and buy the whole shebang all over again. That seems a bit tough to me, and one would have thought that Ocean could have introduced some form of user registration instead.

The two cassettes contain three main files together with a number of demonstration files. The files that matter are the Laser Basic Extension itself, which gives you over 200 extra BASIC commands and functions for handling sprites and sound, and the sprite and sound generator programs.

What it does

Despite its name, *Laser Basic* is not really an extended Basic (although it appears to the user as a series of extended Basic commands) but is really a complex program for manipulating images on the screen. There are also, by the by, a number of general purpose graphics utilities included in the package which can of course be used for purposes other than moving sprites around, but the sprite movement and animation is really what it's all about.

Laser Basic operates in all three display modes quite happily, but some of the commands/functions (about 50 out of the 200 provided) are not compatible with Mode 2. This isn't really a drawback at all since all the important facilities are still provided, and besides, one of the main joys of using sprites comes from using colour as well, so Mode 2 is not likely to be required all that often.

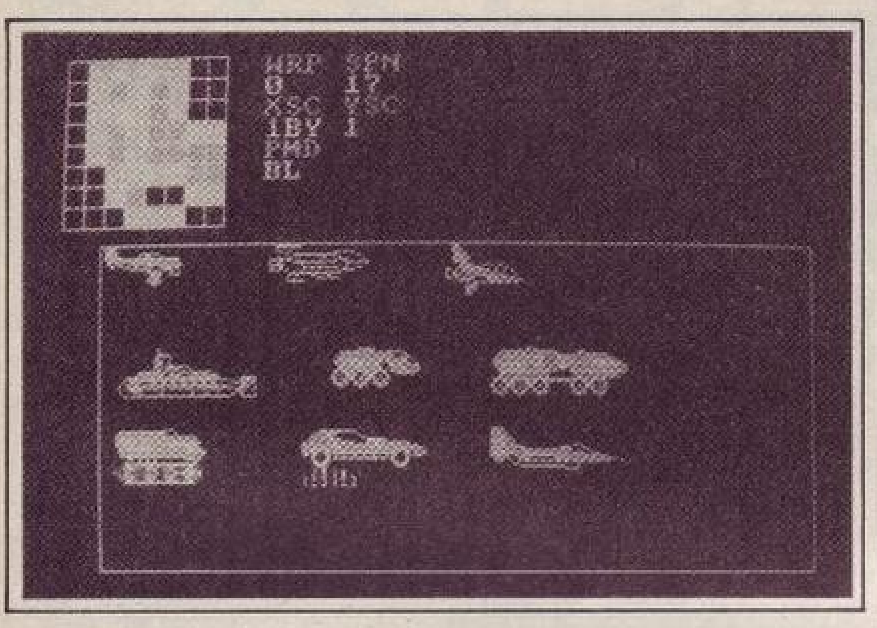
So...200 commands. Sounds hairy, doesn't it?! In fact, most of these commands are subsets of more global operations. For example, there are approximately 40 different scrolling operations, ranging from scrolling a screen window sideways by one pixel at a time to scrolling sprites up and down by any number of pixels between 1 and 255.

Because of this hierarchical structure, it's possible, despite the vast number of commands, to list the basic features of *Laser Basic* quite concisely. Apart from the obviously necessary facility for defining your own sprites in the first place *Laser Basic* allows you to:

- ► Move sprites 'behind' and 'in front' of screen data
- ► Move sprites backwards, forewards, up, and down within predefined areas of the screen ('bouncing')
- ► Move sprites along predetermined paths ('tracking')
- ► Perform logical operations on sprite data, which means ANDing, ORing, and XORing them with existing screen data. These facilities are absolutely essential for sprite programming, allowing for collision detecting and – just as important – moving sprites over backgrounds without corrupting the display.

- ► Expand sprites along their X and Y axis
- ► Rotate, reflect and duplicate sprites
- ► Perform 'collision detection', i.e. tell when two sprites have collided on screen.
- ► Associate different sound effects with individual sprites

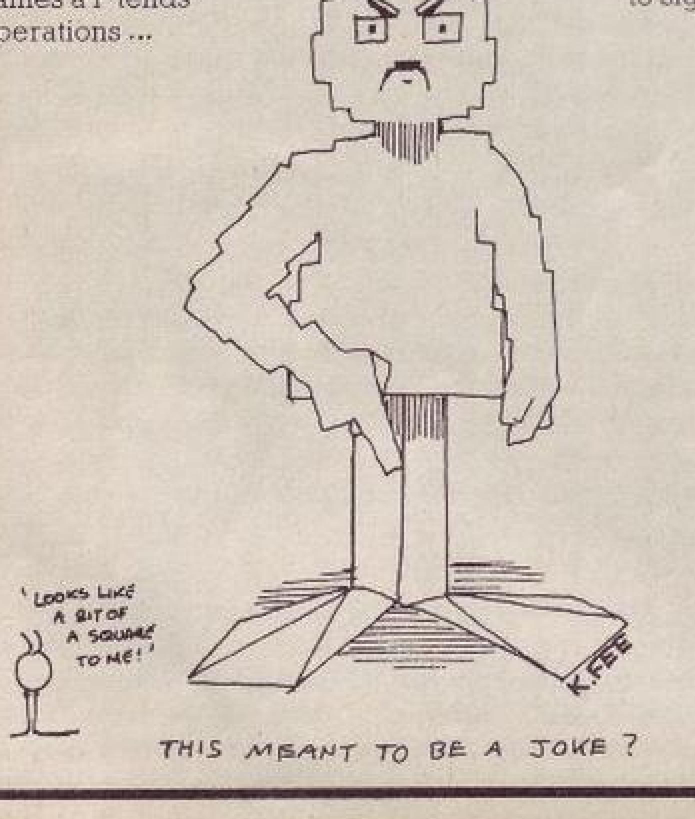
In addition to these basic features, there are a whole host of support facilities for manipulating sprite data, ink colours, tone and amplitude envelopes and so on.



What it all boils down to is this – if there's something you want to do on-screen, you can do it with *Laser Basic*. And the chances are you will be able to do it considerably faster than in Locomotive Basic – always assuming you could do it at all, which (given the slowness of the standard BASIC graphics routines) is highly unlikely.

All the commands and functions take the form of RSXs (bar commands). One initial drawback to the package is that the different command names are not immediately meaningful. This is because almost all the names take the form of four letter mnemonics (like PTBL, INVV, BMVJ and so on) rather than English words and it requires some effort on the part of the user to familiarise him/herself with the logic behind the labels. This approach pays off in the end, however, because instead of having to memorise 200 different command names, you soon find that once you understand the principles behind the construction of the mnemonics that you can work out what a certain command will be to perform a particular task.

For example, WPL1 scrolls a sprite 'window' left by one pixel without wrapping over boundaries, and once you've discovered that within command names a P tends to signify sprite operations ... and a V screen operations it comes as no surprise that WVL1 scrolls a screen window in similar fashion. Although initially unfriendly, I was surprised how quickly I became used to this arrangement and found myself entering legal commands without having looked them up first in the manual, simply by following the rules of syntax.


'LOOKS LIKE A BIT OF A SQUARE TO ME!'
K.FEE
THIS MEANT TO BE A JOKE ?

In fact there are a number of features of this package that indicate that considerable care was taken over program design. For example, one of the problems with dealing with lots of little Pacmen on the screen (or Jet Set Willies, or whatever) is that each sprite tends to have its own set of data to operate on. This would normally mean that every time you address a particular sprite you have to enter a whole long string of parameters to tell it what to do.

This is a real problem, not just because of entry-time but – even worse – because of processor time. Constantly evaluating input parameters takes a lot of fetching, validating, and updating which can slow down your Space Invader to the point where, if there are 100 of them on the screen at once, it takes half an hour for each one to get across the screen! Since *Laser Basic* allows you to create up to 255 sprites, this problem has to be solved, and the system does it very cleverly by defining 'sets' of parameters.

This basically means that you can pre-define your data, and then call it into operation when required very quickly indeed. Whoever designed this package obviously put a lot of thought into it, and that's one of the features where it shows.

Another valuable innovation is the provision of an alternative interrupt handling facility. As most Amstrad programmers will know, Locomotive BASIC supplies you with the AFTER and EVERY commands that use interval timers to call sub-routines on a regular basis independently of the main program – in 'real time' as it were. In fact, however, these standard commands are NOT real-time at all, since Locomotive BASIC will, when an interrupt becomes due for servicing, wait until it has finished the current BASIC instruction before branching off to the indicated sub-routine. This can slow things down very considerably and can also lead to problems if you're using the BASIC INPUT command. Laser BASIC therefore provides a genuine real-time interrupt facility, that will kick your sprites into action regardless of what the foreground program is up to.

Sprite Generators

Every sprite package has to have its own sprite generator program – in fact, some sprite packages don't give you anything else! A sprite generator is basically just a glorified User-Defined-Graphics generator, but you can work on different sizes of grid. Our screenshot shows the *Laser* generator program at work. It offers a large number of options, including merge and animate facilities, together with all the usual inversion, mirroring, and scrolling facilities. There could perhaps have been more commands for manipulating the image, but Ocean are planning to release a separate icon-driven Sprite/Sound generator in the near future that will produce *Laser*-compatible files.

In fact – and the attention to detail in this package is so great that I can't resist mentioning this little feature – the programmers of *Laser Basic* didn't even stop there with interrupts. They went one stage further and looked at the problems involved with executing 'real-time' routines. If you think about it, the most difficult aspect of real-time programming is that you don't know exactly what's going to be going on when your interrupt routine is called. And that in turn means that you won't know what state your data is in. Laser BASIC therefore provides you with a neat way of storing data on entry to a routine and recalling it on exit, thereby preserving your data and avoiding corrupting the foreground program.

Getting down to it

Laser BASIC itself doesn't take up much room, and so you're left

SERIOUS
SOFTWARE

with a decent amount of space for your own program (about 16K as far as I could tell). However, this is obviously going to be whittled away if you want to define large numbers (120+) of sprites.

It's also important to realise that *Laser Basic* programs can't be run independently – that is, without the *Laser Basic* Interpreter being present in memory. However, Ocean are bringing out a range of other related products and one of these, the Laser Basic compiler, will compile your programs into Z80 machine code that will run on any Amstrad micro without the interpreter. However, this compiler will not be able to handle floating-point arithmetic, though in practise that is unlikely to be much of a drawback.

Other related programs will include an icon-driven graphics designer, a music/sound composer, and an assembler/monitor for machine code programmers. There will also be a program called *Mini Laser Basic*, which is a cut-down version of the language, supporting only the main features and leaving more room for sprites and BASIC programs.

One point that may appeal either to machine code programmers or to those who wish to learn machine code is that Ocean are also publishing the source code for the graphics and sound routines used by Laser BASIC. Although much will depend on how well this is documented, this could almost be the most exciting part of the package for some programmers. Often, using other people's high-level sprite routines (like the ones in Laser BASIC) is not as efficient as developing one's own programs. However, if the source code is available it is much easier to incorporate the labours of others into one's own masterpiece! Some would say it's unetihical, but if Ocean want to publish it, I'll be one of the first to use it!

Conclusion

Laser Basic comes from the same stable as *White Lightning* and *Basic Lightning* – two games development utilities that have already had a tremendous reception on other machines. I don't think there is any doubt that this package is of tremendous value to anyone wanting to become involved in graphics programming. It's perhaps unfortunate that the Amstrad ROM routines are rather slow when it comes to graphics, and the sprites created by Laser BASIC are going to suffer accordingly. However, short of having a dedicated processor to look after your Pacmen, this program looks like being as good as you're likely to get. You won't find yourself mastering it inside a week or two, but it will be time well spent and, if you've a hankering for developing a graphics-based arcade game, this is one package you may well find you can't do without.

Sprite Generators

As if *Laser Basic* weren't enough, Steve Malone lays hands on two of the latest sprite generator packages.

The Amstrad has no sprites built in to the video chip – so if you want to write that definitive version of *Space Invaders* you'll need some nifty software. Can Amsoft's *Shape and Sound* and Interceptor's *Panda* do the job? They both claim to make sprite generation as easy as zapping an alien. Steve Malone puts the them to the test.

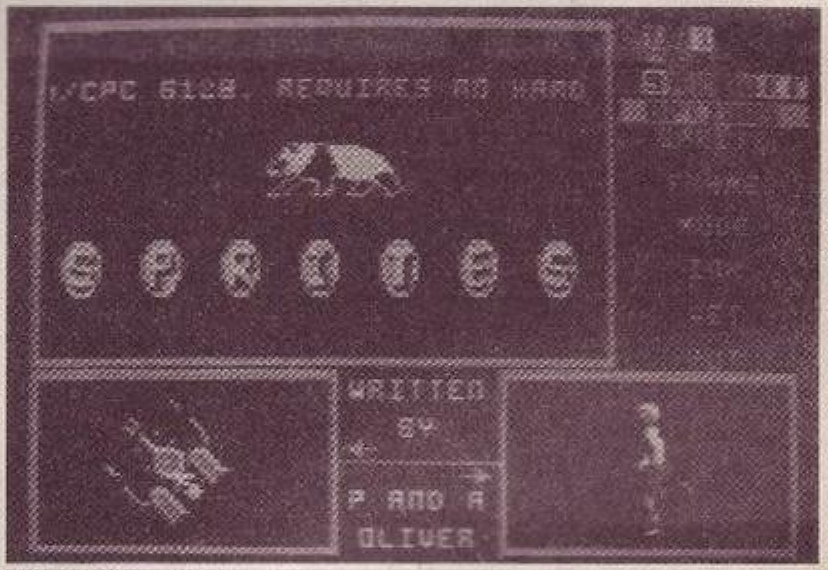
PANDA SPRITES

Interceptor, £9.95 cass

Panda Sprite allows you to generate two distinct types of animation. The first is yer conventional sprite, the kind of small pretty design you see performing acrobatics on most shoot-em-ups. The second type is called a 'frame' which allows the programmer to generate some nifty cartoon-like animation, which, incidentally, is difficult with the conventional type of hardware-based sprite. However, both types are created in much the same manner.

On LOADing the program, you are presented with a screen showing some pretty impressive examples of the kind of thing you can do with the it. The user's appetite is whetted further by the assurance that it's all performed from BASIC. However, before you can start creating your masterpiece, you first have to decide which Mode you want to be in, as drawing a design in one mode and then trying to RUN it in another can produce some pretty abstract effects. This means that before you start you'd better decide whether you want your sprites plain and intricate or created from slabs of colour. However, on the positive side, if you decide on the four colour mode, you can create your own palette beforehand.

Having done that you can then move onto the other features of the Options table. Obviously, if you're starting from scratch you'll want to create your own sprite or frame. Up to 128 frames or 32 sprites can be generated. After deciding which canvas to use, the artist can begin. The frame and sprite definition routines are much the same with the screen divided into three windows. The top window is the canvas, while one of the smaller windows enables the programmer to see what the sprite or frame is actually going to look like. The third window is used for the animation which we'll come to later.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The drawing on the main screen is performed by moving a cursor around with the cursor cluster and pressing the space bar to plot a pixel. Although this system is adequate, I for one would have liked to have been given the chance of using a joystick for those broad strokes. Alas, nowhere does the manual give you the option. Colours can be altered by using the < and > keys and erasing is done by changing to the background colour. Other options that are available from the Draw mode include being able to rotate your design by a specified number of degrees or to move the whole design around the box.

In order to create realistic animation (for example, to show a man running) you need to flash two or more sprites in the same position. This is done by re-editing the original design with any changes and then defining it with a different number. Simplicity itself! Once you have finished editing your sprites, the program gives you the option of choosing which sprites are to be alternated and at what speed you want them to swap.

One of the major problems with sprite generators on all machines is that they allow you to do all manner of creative design and then omit to tell you how to implement the things within a program. Thankfully, *Panda* gives detailed step by step explanations on how to call the routines from BASIC and machine code and create on-screen animation and movement.

The difficult bits of the animation are performed by machine code routines (implemented as | commands) which are LOADed and SAVEd with the designs. All the programmer has to do is to call the routines and define the parameters that are required, for example which frame is to be used and where within the window you want it placed. Therefore |NEWSPRITE allows you to define a sprite and the series of animations that are required, while |SPRITE will print the sprite and step through the sequence on screen.

Three other commands are implemented by *Panda* allowing additional features. |COLLIDE is used to detect sprite collisions, which no self-respecting arcade game can do without. Less exciting, but equally important are |WINDOW which defines the window in which the frame or sprite will be positioned and finally, there is the |SCROLL command which scrolls a section of the screen, although it must be admitted that this command can creak a bit if the window is too big.

The result of all of this is some very impressive-looking graphics. The sprite animation is as impressive as you'll see anywhere, and if the frame animation has a tendency to flicker a bit, well you've got 128 of them to play with as opposed to only 32 sprites, what do you expect?

SHAPE and SOUND

Amsoft/Gem, £14.95, disc only

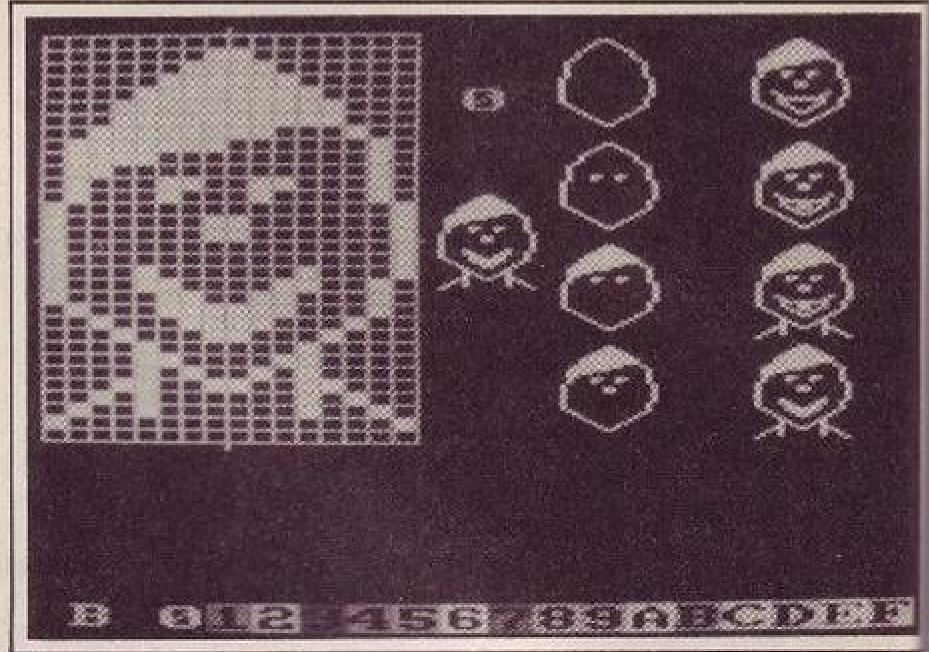
The approach of Amsoft's *Shape and Sound* is slightly different. The package only allows sprite generation in two modes (0 and 1) rather than three. However, like *Panda* the program does allow you to select which colours you wish to use before you begin.

Once you are in the 'Shape Generator', the approach is much the same. At the top of the screen is a grid, which – depending on the mode you have selected – will be either 16 or 32 columns wide by 32 columns deep. Cursor movement is performed by using the numeric keypad in compass fashion, and plotting via the keys 0-9 and A-F on the typewriter keyboard. These correspond to each of the sixteen colours available in mode 0, which I found preferable to the <> colour selection on the Panda. On the other hand I found the criss-cross grid a bit distracting, and preferred *Panda's* 'clean' canvas.

As you create the design on the grid the actual sized sprite takes shape at the side. Once the shape has been completed, it can be transferred to the storage area on the right hand side of the screen. The Shape Generator can store up to 128 different designs. Position for each new design is selected by means of a movable window which scans across the storage area.

This windowing system is also used when it comes to selecting which designs you are going to include in your animation. Moving the window over a design and pressing CTRL A adds the shape to the sequence. Once all the shapes have been chosen, an on-screen demo of your masterpiece can be played. Again the programmer is allowed to select the speed at which the sprites change.

The Amsoft package contains a number of commands above those used by *Panda*, which are implemented using Control characters. Among those I found most useful was Fill Rectangle. By setting the top left and bottom right hand corners the computer will automatically fill the rectangle with a chosen colour, which – believe me – is far preferable to filling each pixel in with a separate keypress. Another useful command is Copy Quarter which fills in three quarters of the grid with the design present in the other quarter. Nice for making those symmetrical Aliens.



Getting down to business with Amsoft's Shape and Sound Effect Generator.

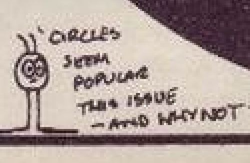
Animation is performed from BASIC by using a similar system to that of *Panda*. The hard work is performed by | commands leaving the programmer only having to say what goes where. Where the Amsoft product falls down is in simply telling you how the command works and giving an example rather than walking the nervous programmer (such as your humble writer) through. Still, that's my problem.

One major feature of the *S and S* which I've never come across before in a sprite generator is the ability of the program to generate print-outs of the designs. Its so obvious and so useful, it makes you wonder why no-one has thought of it before.

Also included in the Amsoft package, almost as an afterthought, is the sound generator. This part of the program makes use of the commands that are already available in BASIC and presents them in a more useable form. In order to help the novice musician, details of the sound parameters are displayed on the screen. Furthermore, once you have developed the sound you like, there is a utility to provide 'step-time programming'. This means that you can record Beethoven's Piano Concerto one note at a time rather than have to play the lot in one go.

The verdict

On the face of it, these packages look much the same, but because their approach is so very different its hard to say which is the better. *Panda Sprites* is a high quality and friendly, albeit limited, program which will be a valuable addition to the amateur programmer's toolkit. On the other hand, Amsoft's *Shape and Sound* has a wealth of facilities which will appeal to the more 'serious' games programmer. If sometimes it suffers from trying to be all things to all men, you can't fault the boys and girls at Gem, who programmed it, for trying.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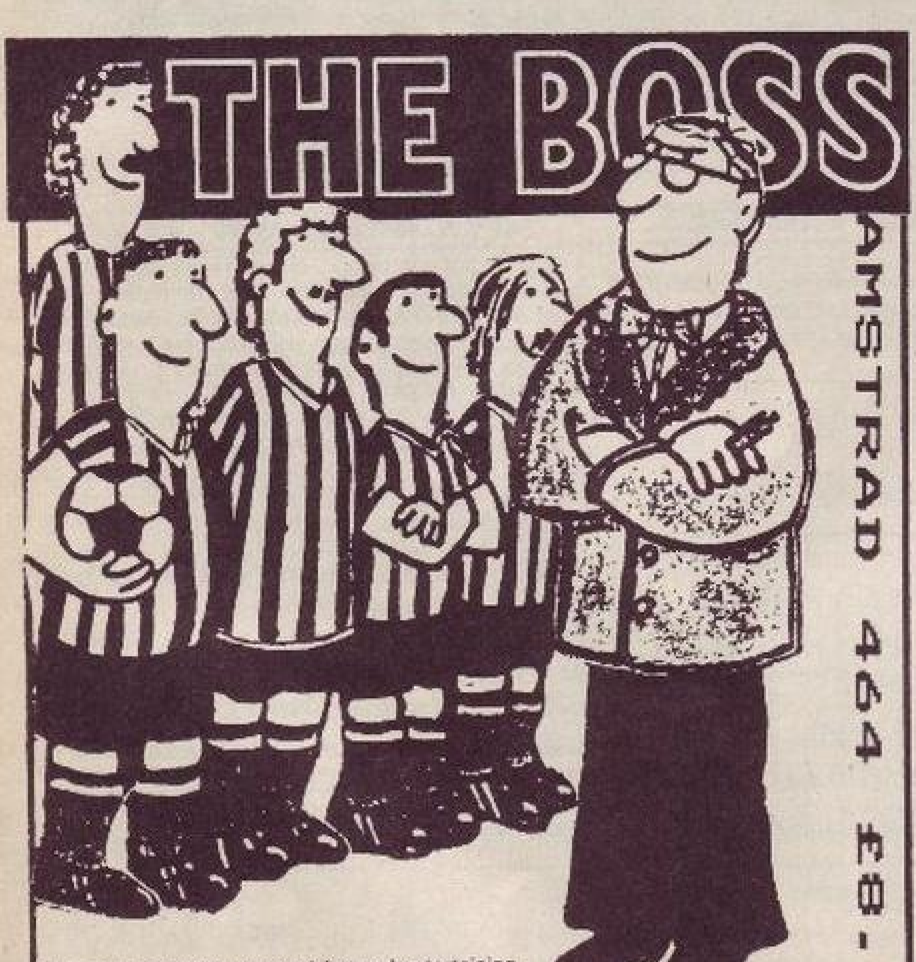

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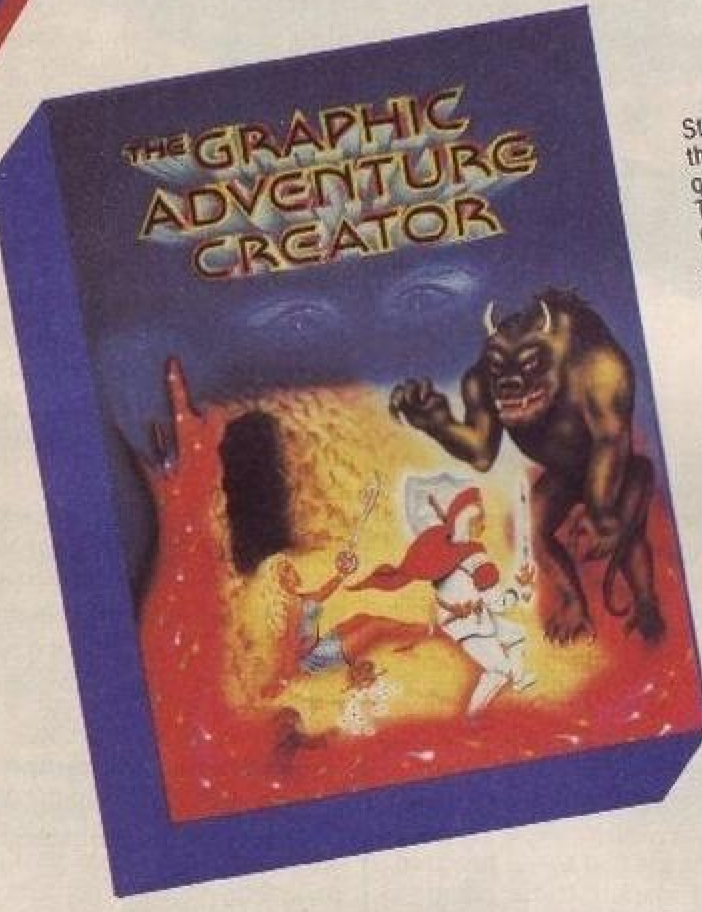
WITH THE MOST POWERFUL FLEXIBLE AND EASY TO USE UTILITY EVER.....



Stunning Graphics like these can be generated quickly and easily with The Graphic Adventure Creators built in picture generator. The many features include Line (using elastic banding), dot, circle, ellipse, fast fill, shading, step by step review, easy editing and progressive stop delete functions.

Another powerful feature is the ability to merge pictures, saving time, effort and memory.

Other GAC features include space for up to 765 different verbs, nouns and adverbs, the ability for objects to have individual characteristics (weight/cost etc), alphabetical word scanning and sorting, a full diagnostic screen showing current status of the 255 markers plus 128 counters, the acceptance of synonyms, total Disc and Tape compatibility, high and low priority plus local conditions, separate printer menu etc etc.

The Graphic Adventure Creator (GAC) for the Amstrad CPC range of computers, has been specifically developed to enable YOU to produce fast, compact adventure games with the minimum of effort and the maximum of creativity.

COMPREHENSIVE INTELLIGENT COMMAND INTERPRETER
Handling complex sentences and multiple command lines, the user is not restricted (unlike others) to 2 word input. "It" detection is also included.

INCENTIVE

e.g. "Take the box and open it carefully. Examine the silver charm then put it in the box" is a perfectly valid input!

EXTENSIVE TEXT COMPRESSION
This allows you to create far more detailed and more numerous location descriptions to improve the playability of your adventures. With a full function editor, GAC features automatic word formatting, a logical command interpreter and abbreviated input acceptance. GAC will recognise and distinguish ANY word e.g. River/Rivet, Screw/Screen, Trout/Trousers etc. etc.

N.B. Adventures created using GAC will run totally independently on any Amstrad computer without the need for GAC to be present in memory.

GAC incorporates the Lenslok system.

£ MAKE MONEY £

We are urgently looking for atmospheric, original, humorous and imaginative graphic adventures written with GAC with a view to publishing your adventures for you.

NOTE: No copyright problems. Authors! You are totally free to market your adventures through ANY company without any payment or royalties whatsoever due to Incentive.

The Graphic Adventure Creator for the Amstrad CPC Computer range is complete with an informative and friendly manual, the Quick start file and a free example adventure - Advinman!
GAC retails at **£22.95** on cassette and **£27.95** on disc and is available from leading multiple and independent retailers or by our fast mail order service (1st class post Free).

Unleash your Imagination with The Graphic Adventure Creator

PRIORITY ORDER FORM

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Can't wait for loading from tape? Want to get those games on disc? *Joseph Winchester* casts an experienced eye over the utilities that help you do it.

Tape-to-Disc what it's all about

OK, so you've just bought yourself a disk drive. It's good isn't it? Better still, you own a 664 or 6128. You've read that programs that take 8 minutes to load from tape only take 8 seconds from disc. Then you come across a small problem. Namely, how to get your latest megagame from tape onto disc. You could send it back to the software company who wrote it and for a small fee (the price of a blank disc) they'll usually return you a disc version – but it's worth checking first. This will be a very expensive operation if you own a large software collection. Your second option is to learn machine code, fork out the best part of 20 quid on the concise firmware guide and start to transfer them yourself. You'll find it's not all a bed of roses, and you'll need a lot of patience plus several thousand cups of coffee. It may help to be insomniac. Option three is to buy one of the so-called tape to disc copier programs. This is where this article comes in, stage left, to a fanfare of trumpets.

"To buy, or not to buy? That is the question". More importantly, which program ? Three copying programs are reviewed here: *Idle Meddler* from Nemesis, *Transmat* from Pride Utilities, and *Discovery* from Siren.

I should start by saying that if and when you buy one of these, you'll find that there may still be some problems. Even if you successfully transfer the game onto disc it may need to be modified before it runs. I say 'even' because there are two types of program ("turbo" and "headerless") which cannot be readily put onto disc. *Discovery* has (in the latest versions) got a turbo option, but I'll discuss that later.

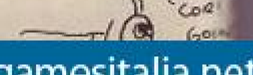
You can tell what type your game is by cataloguing the tape with the volume up. If you get a nice message at regular intervals telling you the name of the program, block number, etc, then you have what is known as a ***block game*** (so called because it consists of many blocks on the cassette). Generally speaking the earlier games fall into this category. The copying programs reviewed here all handle this type of block program admirably. If, however, you are unlucky enough not to see all the blocks names appearing during a catalog, but instead hear a noise rather like an in-season cat ice skating on its claws then you have a ***turbo*** or ***headerless*** program. *Discovery* is the only one of the three copiers that can help you with the turbos. None can tackle the headerless programs.

A word all three programs talk about is ***relocaters***. You don't need to understand how these work, but I'll try to explain what they do. When you have a disc drive connected, there is less available memory than the standard 464 wihtout drive. The top 3% of memory is used by your disc interface and it is also used by some tape-based games, which means that as the program is being loaded it will compete with the disc drive for this memory, and crash the system. Before you drop everything and give up I'll introduce a neat method of overcoming this; a relocater. This changes the program so that the program is loaded back from disc lower down in memory (avoiding a clash with the aforementioned 3%), and when called the relocater moves the program back to where it should be, kicking the disc out of the way, and is ready to run. All three copying programs add relocaters unless you tell them not to.

Most commercial block games consist of a basic loader and a machine code main part. In the basic part there may well be the command "RUN", which is meaningless for a disc program. If this is the case then you'll need to list the basic part (all three copiers deprotect basic as it is put onto disc) and insert the relevant filename. This will just be the name of the next part of the program. All three copiers make this clear, and explain how to go about doing this.

☛ Warning ☚

The programs reviewed here are to be used only for the transferring onto disc of programs of which you own original copies. Any copies you make are solely for YOUR personal use. Any lending or selling of programs without first obtaining permission from the copyright owner is illegal. If you are in any doubt, then do not copy. We aren't being spoilsports, but by pirating games (even if only for your friends) you are breaking the law as well as causing untold harm to the software houses and the future of the whole industry. Neither Amstrad Action nor any of the programs mentioned in this article will be party to the unauthorised copying of software for any purposes whatsoever.



IDLE MEDDLER

Nemesis, £4.50 cass

This program comes on a cassette, but readily transfers itself to disc. There is also a tape-to-tape copying option plus a few other goodies. A newsletter is included. This contains a list of many of the games *Idle Meddler* can copy, as well as several specific changes needed to get some of the more difficult ones to work.

When you use *Idle Meddler* you'll notice that lots of funny coloured lines appear on the screen. You wouldn't be excused from thinking that you've crashed your Amstrad, but fret not, for all is O.K. *Meddler* is written in the screen memory so as to handle the problem of being overwritten by long programs. This is a neat idea, but rather messy. The 'prompt messages' telling you what to do scroll on a small window at the bottom of the screen and are rather difficult to follow.

The Nemesis set-up strikes me as being one of the "cottage industry". This isn't meant as an insult – far from it – but I think the program lacks the professional finish of *Transmat* and *Discovery*. If you're looking for a tape-to-tape and tape-to-disc copier for under a fiver then *Idle Meddler* will do, but you may soon find that you want something more sophisticated. As for the tape-to-tape copier I shall only say that it is restricted to block programs and there are far better copiers on the market that can handle turbo and headerless tape-to-tape copying.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **The only one to include a tape-to-tape copier**
- ▶ **Nice friendly newsletter**
- ▶ **Can also de-protect basic disc files**
- ▶ **Includes several other goodies**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Poor instructions**
- ▶ **Very user un-friendly**
- ▶ **Cannot catalog a disc from within *Meddler***

TRANSMAT

Pride Utilities, £7.95 cass, £11.95 disc

If you opt for the tape version you'll find the first thing you are told to do is to use *Transmat* to put itself onto disc. Two modes are available: automatic and not-automatic. Unless you are sure that the game you want to transfer has no code that needs relocating (eg. a long basic game) I suggest you always opt for the non-auto mode. This relocates where it should, and offers you the option of renaming the program as it goes onto disc. A very useful feature is that you can go into basic, change a few colours or catalog a tape, and then back into *Transmat* by typing TMAT. Also available is the option to rename and erase disc files, and to go into CPM. You can also produce an intelligent disc catalog, displaying information on the lengths, types, and addresses of programs.

Transmat doesn't produce messy lines all over the screen like *Idle Meddler*, but then it doesn't need to because it transfers the game onto disc in pieces. What this means to you or me is that it is very user-friendly and still works on very long programs. A help sheet for specific program copying is not available yet, but I am told one is in the pipeline.

Transmat is a really good program with a professional sheen to the whole thing. It does seem to be slightly overpriced, but it only falls down in that it doesn't read tape headers for you.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Very easy to use**
- ▶ **Offers many disc utilities**
- ▶ **Good, well explained manual**
- ▶ **Only program to offer option of sending output to printer**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Doesn't read tape headers**

DISCOVERY

Siren Software, £7.99 cass, £11.99 disc

Discovery, unlike *Transmat* or *Idle Meddler*, will not allow itself to be transferred to disc. This rather disappointed me. If you write a utility to transfer programs from tape to disc that won't transfer itself, I reckon the software houses are entitled to call you a hypocrytye.

That aside, *Discovery* is a really excellent program – that is, the most recent version. If you have an earlier version (the one without the turbo option) then you can return it to Siren, who for the sum of £3 will change it for you.

Discovery has two unique features. One of these is a turbo copy option. Until now I've been saying how only block games can be put onto disc, but that was before *Discovery* came along. My hat must go off to Siren, for I really thought this impossible to do. No more sleepless nights of hacking. However the turbo option has its limitations. It can't relocate code that goes on top of the program and basically it copies one particular company's games and not much else. If you have a fairly large software collection and indulge in a daily waggle of your joystick (cryptic clue) then the chances are you'll own some of these.

The second unique feature is the ability to modify the basic loader program automatically in an attempt to get it to run from disc. If there is a "LOAD" in the basic loading program, then *Discovery* will insert the relevant filename. Very neat. The system isn't foolproof but it worked on roughly 80% of the programs I tried. If it doesn't work, you can always use the non-auto mode and proceed to change the loader manually.

As well as these unique features it can do everything that *Transmat* can, except send output to the printer or go back into basic without a hard reset (ctrl-shift-esc).

So *Discovery* is by far and away the best of the three programs. Siren really know the ins and outs of copying programs, and *Discovery* lives up to their reputation. If you have a disc drive and some tape-based software then I strongly recommend *Discovery*.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Can directly enter CPM**
- ▶ **Turbo option**
- ▶ **Tries to modify basic loader programs**
- ▶ **Good manual**
- ▶ **Very easy to use**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Can't backup itself onto disc**

The Last Word

There's no doubt that *Discovery* comes out of this overview smelling distinctly of roses. It does everything the other two programs do, and an important extra bit too. None of the programs is bad: they all do the job they set out to do. It's just that *Discovery* does it best and across the widest range of games.

MUSIC COMPOSER

By SIMON SELWAY

A program to help you write and save your own tunes!

Here's a very slick program which allows you to write and edit pieces of music on your Amstrad. The music can consist of two tunes playing simultaneously (hopefully in harmony – but that's up to you!), and each tune can be up to 1000 notes long, enough to write a minor symphony.

To use the program you have to enter the notes in standard musical notation – if you don't know how to do that, it's an excellent way of learning, because the program prompts you at each stage. Alternatively, you can simply copy a piece of music from a published source such as a song book, entering both the melody and a bass accompaniment.

Using the prog

When the program is run, the screen should be split up into three windows, one of which contains a menu of six options which are outlined below:

1. ENTERING MUSIC. Each note is entered in two stages. First you position the note on the five-line 'staff' using cursor keys, according to how high or low you want it to sound. The note is entered by pressing the S, F or N keys according to whether the note is to be Sharp, Flat or Natural. Alternatively you can press R and a 'rest' is entered instead of a note.

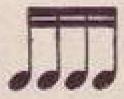
Next a choice of notes or rests of different lengths (one beat, two beats, half-a-beat, etc) appears in the bottom window and you highlight one using the cursor keys. You then press 0,1 or 2 to indicate how many dots are to appear after the note. (A dot lengthens the duration of the note by 50%, two dots by 75%.) Once you've done this, the note is printed in position on the staff.

You then repeat the process for the accompanying note (or rest)on the bass staff, before moving on to the second pair of notes. Where things get a bit tricky is if you enter notes or rests of different lengths on the two staves. This means that future pairs of notes will not be synchronised, so you have to keep an independent check on each.

2. EDIT MUSIC. This offers you the chance to scroll forward or backward through your tune until you reach a pair of notes you want to alter. Notes can be deleted or inserted in similar way to above.

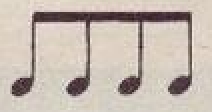
'DIG THAT CRAZY BEAT'

3. PLAY MUSIC. This is the fun bit when you hear your creation. First you are allowed to select the speed at which it's to run, then you just sit back and enjoy, or more likely, wince and try again.

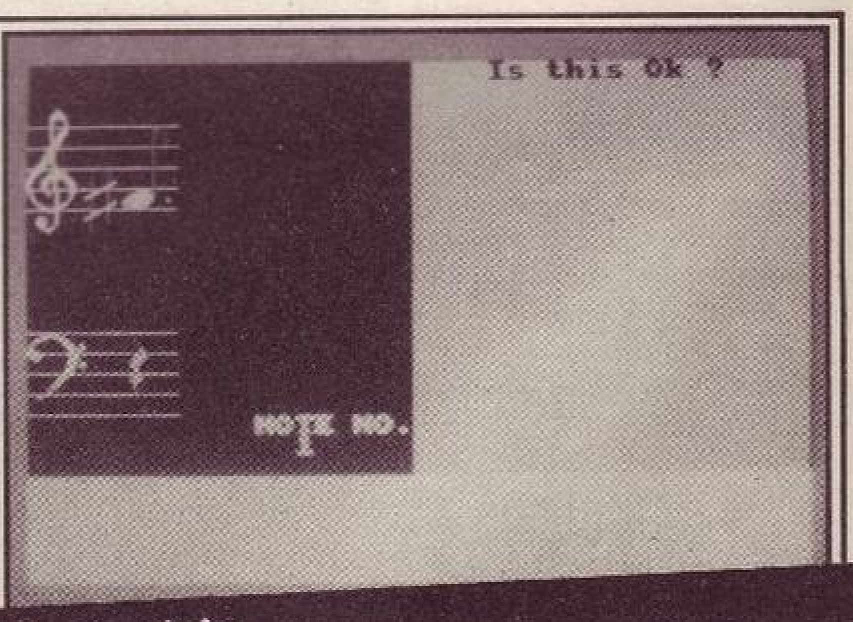


4. CLEAR MEMORY. This gets rid of the tune in memory. Be careful not to hit the key by accident as you are not offered a chance to change your mind.

5. SAVE MUSIC. You can save you music in two ways – either for reloading into this program (press A for ASCII file), or for use in a program of your own (press B for binary file).



6. LOAD MUSIC. This allows you to reload a tune previously saved using the 5A option. If there is already music in memory, the music loaded will be added to the end of it.



```
Is this Ok ?

NOTE NO.
   1
```

Typing it in

As with all longish listings – this one's about 10K – a certain amount of patience and diligence is required. Be especially careful entering the DATA statements as the errors here could cause the program to crash.

It's definitely worth sav the program every so ofte you type it in as a safety pre tion. And you MUST save it be attempting to run it in ca crashes.

```
10 INK 0,0:INK 1,5:INK 2,13:INK 3,6:BORDER 1
20 DIM n(1,1000),tp(36),bp(36)
30 ZONE 40
40 SYMBOL AFTER 189
50 DATA 0,0,0,8,8,8,8,9,16,16,16,16,22,30,120,240,15,30,120,
104,8,8,8,9,144,16,16,16,22,30,120,240,15,30,120,104,8,8,8,8
,144,16,16,16,16,0,0,0,0,8,8,8,8,8,8,8,8,8,9,14,8,8,0,0,
0,96,152,4,4,4,8,8,8,8,15,0,0,0,4,8,48,192,0,0,0,0
60 DATA 0,24,60,126,98,65,65,65,67,71,78,76,60,56,120,112,0,
0,1,3,3,7,14,28,224,224,224,160,160,32,16,16,56,112,96,193,1
95,131,131,129,28,127,255,209,144,16,16,16,0,0,128,192,224,1
12,48,48,64,64,32,32,16,12,3,0,136,72,8,8,8,11,12,248,48,32,
32,64,128,0,0,0
70 DATA 0,0,6,15,15,6,3,0,8,8,8,8,8,16,32,192,0,7,24,32,64,6
4,128,248,240,14,3,1,0,0,0,0,0,0,128,192,227,115,56,56,124,5
6,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,1,56,56,112,115,115,224,224,192,
3,6,12,24,48,64,128,0,12,0,0,0,0,0,0,3,31,63,127,255,255,1
27,31
80 DATA 244,252,252,252,248,240,224,128,1,7,15,31,63,63,63,4
7,248,254,255,255,254,252,248,192,3,30,56,96,192,128,96,31,2
44,12,4,12,24,48,224,128,1,7,12,24,48,32,48,47,248,6,1,3,6,2
8,120,192,31,120,240,224,224,240,120,31,248,30,15,7,7,15,30,
248
90 DATA 0,0,0,0,255,255,255,255,0,0,0,0,254,254,254,254,128,
128,64,32,16,8,8,8,8,8,8,16,32,64,128,128,0,8,4,2,1,1,1,3,0,
0,0,0,0,128,192,224,7,15,31,31,30,14,6,3,224,192,128,0,0,0,0
,0,31,31,30,12,12,4,2,1,0,128,64,0,0,0,0,0,12,30,30,12,3,0,0
,0
100 DATA 8,24,40,208,16,16,32,32,32,64,64,64,128,128,128,0,9
6,240,241,102,24,0,0,1,32,192,64,64,128,128,128,0,1,1,2,2,2,
4,4,4,1,3,3,1,0,0,0,0,129,195,198,154,98,4,4,4,24,60,126,255
,24,24,24,24,24,24,24,24,255,126,60,24,56,68,170,146,170,68,
56,0
110 DATA 16,48,112,255,255,112,48,16,8,12,14,255,255,14,12,8
120 DATA 338,1073,319,1012,301,984,284,956,268,902,253,851,2
46,804,239,758,225,737,213,716,201,676,190,638,184,602,179,5
68,169,536,159,506,150,492,142,478,134,451,127,426,123,402,1
19,379,113,368,106,358,100,338,95,319,92,301,89,284,84,268,8
0,253,75,246
130 DATA 71,239,67,225,63,213,61,201,60,190,56,184
140 FOR x=189 TO 252:READ a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h:SYMBOL x,a,b,c,d,e
,f,g,h:NEXT
150 FOR f=0 TO 36:READ tp(f),bp(f):NEXT
160 MODE 1:WINDOW 1,20,1,20:WINDOW#1,1,40,21,25:WINDOW#2,21,
40,1,20
170 FOR f=0 TO 2:PAPER #f,f:NEXT:GOTO 1650
180 IF nn>999 THEN 1710
190 ch=0
```

```
200 CLS#1:CLS#2
210 GOSUB 410
220 nn=nn+1:GOTO 180
230 TAGOFF:CLS:PEN 2:FOR a=0 TO 4:LOCATE 1,3+a:PRINT"_______
_":LOCATE 1,13+a:PRINT"_________":NEXT
240 PEN 1:PRINT CHR$(22)+CHR$(1):LOCATE 2,3:PRINT CHR$(200)C
HR$(10)CHR$(8)CHR$(201):PRINT CHR$(202)CHR$(203):PRINT CHR$(
204)CHR$(205)CHR$(206):PRINT CHR$(207)CHR$(208)CHR$(209):PRI
NT CHR$(210)CHR$(211)
250 LOCATE 1,14:PRINT CHR$(212)CHR$(213)CHR$(214):PRINT CHR$
(215)CHR$(216)CHR$(217):PRINT CHR$(216)CHR$(218):PRINT CHR$(
219)
260 RETURN
270 PEN#2,0:PRINT#2," "CHR$(248)CHR$(249)" - Move cursor",,"
  S - Sharp",,"  F - Flat",,"  N - Natural",,"  R - Rest",,,
:IF ch=0 THEN PRINT#2,"  M - Menu"
280 LOCATE 13,18:PRINT"NOTE NO.":LOCATE 14,19:PRINT nn+1;
290 n$="":PRINT CHR$(22)CHR$(0)CHR$(23)CHR$(1):TAG
300 PLOT -10,-10,3:MOVE 80,y:PRINT CHR$(250);
310 y1=0
320 IF INKEY(38)=0 AND ch=0 THEN 1660
330 IF INKEY(0)=0 AND y<yt THEN y1=8
340 IF INKEY(2)=0 AND y>yb THEN y1=-8
350 IF INKEY(60)=0 THEN n$="S" ELSE IF INKEY(53)=0 THEN n$="
F" ELSE IF INKEY(46)=0 THEN n$="N" ELSE IF INKEY(50)=0 THEN
n$="R"
360 IF n$<>"" THEN IF n$<>"R" THEN 500 ELSE GOTO 850
370 FOR f=1 TO 50:NEXT
380 IF y1=0 THEN 310
390 MOVE 80,y:PRINT CHR$(250);
400 y=y+y1:GOTO 300
```

```
410 GOSUB 230
420 y=278:yt=390:yb=254:GOSUB 270
430 n(0,nn)=(y-250)/4*-(n$<>"R")-100*(n$="F")-200*(n$="S")+t
*1000+VAL(a$)*10000
440 CLS#1:CLS#2:y=118:yt=230:yb=94:GOSUB 270
450 n(1,nn)=(y-90)/4*-(n$<>"R")-100*(n$="F")-200*(n$="S")+t*
1000+VAL(a$)*10000
460 CLS#1:CLS#2:PRINT#2,"    Is this Ok ?"
470 a$=UPPER$(INKEY$):IF a$<>"N" AND a$<>"Y" THEN 470
480 IF a$="N" THEN CLS#1:CLS#2:GOTO 410
490 RETURN
500 PLOT -10,-10,2:y=y-100:FOR x=18 TO 338 STEP 64:MOVE x,22
:ON (x+46)/64 GOSUB 600,610,640,670,700,730:NEXT:y=y+100
510 CLS#2:PRINT#2,"  "CHR$(251)CHR$(252)" - Move cursor",,"
0-2 - No. of dots              after note"
520 GOTO 530
530 x=0
540 MOVE x,0:DRAWR 64,0,1:DRAWR 0,78:DRAWR -64,0:DRAWR 0,-78
:MOVER 2,2:DRAWR 60,0:DRAWR 0,74:DRAWR -60,0:DRAWR 0,-74
550 FOR f=1 TO 10:a$=UPPER$(INKEY$):IF a$>"/" AND a$<"3" THE
N t=x/64:GOTO 760
560 NEXT f
570 x1=(INKEY(8)=0 AND x>0)-(INKEY(1)=0 AND x<320)
580 IF x1=0 THEN 550
590 MOVE x,0:DRAWR 64,0,1:DRAWR 0,78:DRAWR -64,0:DRAWR 0,-78
:MOVER 2,2:DRAWR 60,0:DRAWR 0,74:DRAWR -60,0:DRAWR 0,-74:x=x
+x1*64:GOTO 540
600 PRINT CHR$(228)CHR$(229);:RETURN
```

```
610 IF y>yt-72 THEN 630
620 PRINT CHR$(224)CHR$(225);:MOVER -6,2:DRAWR 0,48:RETURN
630 PRINT CHR$(226)CHR$(227);:MOVER -28,-16:DRAWR 0,-48:RETU
RN
640 IF y>yt-72 THEN 660
650 PRINT CHR$(220)CHR$(221);:MOVER -6,2:DRAWR 0,48:RETURN
660 PRINT CHR$(222)CHR$(223);:MOVER -28,-16:DRAWR 0,-48:RETU
RN
670 IF y>yt-72 THEN 690
680 GOSUB 650:MOVER 2,0:PRINT CHR$(232);:RETURN
690 GOSUB 660:MOVER 2,14:PRINT CHR$(233);:RETURN
700 IF y>yt-72 THEN 720
710 GOSUB 680:MOVER -16,-16:PRINT CHR$(232);:RETURN
720 GOSUB 690:MOVER -16,16:PRINT CHR$(233);:RETURN
730 IF y>yt-72 THEN 750
740 GOSUB 710:MOVER -16,-16:PRINT CHR$(232);:RETURN
750 GOSUB 720:MOVER -16,16:PRINT CHR$(233);:RETURN
760 PLOT -10,-10,3:MOVE 80,y:PRINT CHR$(250);
770 TAGOFF:PRINT CHR$(23)CHR$(3);:TAG:x=x/64+1:o=x:MOVE 80,y
:IF n$="R" THEN MOVE 80,yb+80:o=o+6
780 ON o GOSUB 600,610,640,670,700,730,870,880,890,900,910,9
20
790 y1=y-6:IF n$="R" THEN y1=yb+74
800 IF a$>"0" THEN PLOT 118,y1:PLOTR 2,0:PLOTR 0,-2:PLOTR -2
,0:IF a$="2" THEN PLOT 124,y1:PLOTR 2,0:PLOTR 0,-2:PLOTR -2,
0
810 IF n$="S" THEN MOVE 46,y+16:PRINT CHR$(189)CHR$(190);:MO
VER -32,-16:PRINT CHR$(191)CHR$(192);:MOVER -32,-16:PRINT CH
R$(193)CHR$(194);
820 IF n$="F" THEN MOVE 46,y+26:PRINT CHR$(195);:MOVER -16,-
16:PRINT CHR$(196)CHR$(197);:MOVER -32,-16:PRINT CHR$(198)CH
R$(199);
830 TAGOFF
840 RETURN
850 PLOT -10,-10,2:FOR x=18 TO 338 STEP 64:MOVE x,56:ON (x+4
6)/64 GOSUB 870,880,890,900,910,920:NEXT
860 GOTO 510
870 MOVER 0,10:PRINT CHR$(230)CHR$(231);:RETURN
880 PRINT CHR$(230)CHR$(231);:RETURN
890 MOVER 0,16:PRINT CHR$(234)CHR$(235);:MOVER -32,-16:PRINT
 CHR$(236)CHR$(237);:MOVER -32,-16:PRINT CHR$(238)CHR$(239);
:RETURN
900 PRINT CHR$(240)CHR$(241);:MOVER -32,-16:PRINT CHR$(216)C
```

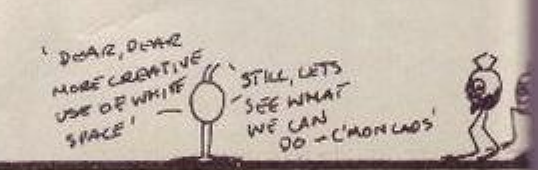
```
HR$(242);:RETURN
910 PRINT CHR$(240)CHR$(241);:MOVER -32,-16:PRINT CHR$(243)C
HR$(244);:MOVER -32,-16:PRINT CHR$(245);:RETURN
920 GOSUB 910:MOVER -16,48:PRINT CHR$(246)CHR$(247);:RETURN
930 CLS:CLS#2
940 ch=1
950 IF nn=0 THEN 1270
960 s$=SPACE$(20):n1$="NFS":PLOT -10,-10,3:nn1=nn
970 nn=0
980 CLS#2:PEN#2,0:PRINT#2," I - Insert a note "s$" D - Delet
e note    "s$" "CHR$(252)" - Forwards 1 note"s$" "CHR$(251)"
 - Back 1 note"s$" SHIFT+"CHR$(252)" - Forwards","
                                               10 notes"
 10 notes SHIFT+"CHR$(251)" - Back","
                                                    100
990 PRINT#2," CTRL+"CHR$(252)"  - Forwards","
                                          100 notes"," M -
notes CTRL+"CHR$(251)"  - Back","
 Menu"
1000 GOSUB 230:LOCATE 13,18:PRINT"NOTE NO.":LOCATE 14,19:PRI
NT nn+1;
1010 x=INT((n(0,nn)MOD 10000)/1000)*64:y=(n(0,nn)MOD 100)*4+
250:yb=254:yt=390:n$=MID$(n1$,INT((n(0,nn)MOD 1000)/100)+1,1
):a$=MID$(STR$(INT(n(0,nn)/10000)),2):IF n(0,nn)MOD 100=0 TH
EN n$="R"
1020 GOSUB 770
1030 x=INT((n(1,nn)MOD 10000)/1000)*64:y=(n(1,nn)MOD 100)*4+
90:yb=94:yt=230:n$=MID$(n1$,INT((n(1,nn)MOD 1000)/100)+1,1):
a$=MID$(STR$(INT(n(1,nn)/10000)),2):IF n(1,nn)MOD 100=0 THEN
 n$="R"
1040 GOSUB 770
1050 CLS#1
1060 d=0
1070 IF INKEY(38)=0 THEN nn=nn1:GOTO 1660
1080 f=INKEY(1):IF f=0 THEN d=1 ELSE IF f=32 THEN d=10 ELSE
IF f=128 THEN d=100
1090 b=INKEY(8):IF b=0 THEN d=-1 ELSE IF b=32 THEN d=-10 ELS
E IF b=128 THEN d=-100
1100 IF INKEY(35)=0 THEN 1150
1110 IF INKEY(61)=0 THEN 1210
1120 IF d=0 THEN 1070
1130 IF nn+d<0 THEN nn=0 ELSE IF nn+d>=nn1 THEN nn=nn1-1 ELS
E nn=nn+d
1140 GOTO 1000
1150 IF nn1>999 THEN nn=nn1:GOTO 1710
1160 CLS#2:PRINT#2,,,,,"    Please  wait"
1170 FOR f=nn1-1 TO nn STEP -1:n(0,f+1)=n(0,f):n(1,f+1)=n(1,
f):NEXT
1180 CLS#2:GOSUB 410:CLS#2
1190 nn1=nn1+1
1200 GOTO 980
1210 IF nn1<1 THEN nn=nn1:GOTO 1260
1220 CLS#2:PRINT#2,,,,," Deleting note"nn+1:FOR f=1 TO 1000
-nn1+nn:NEXT
1230 FOR f=nn+1 TO nn1:n(0,f-1)=n(0,f):n(1,f-1)=n(1,f):NEXT
1240 nn1=nn1-1:IF nn>=nn1 THEN nn=nn1-1:IF nn<0 THEN nn=0:GO
TO 1270
1250 GOTO 980
1260 CLS#2
1270 IF nn=0 THEN CLS:PRINT#2,"There is no music in        me
mory"CHR$(7):FOR f=1 TO 2000:NEXT:GOTO 1660
1280 PRINT#2,"   Enter tempo in   crotchets per minute":INPU
T #2,tempo
1290 tempo=750/tempo
1300 CLS#2:PRINT#2,,,,,"    Please  wait"
1310 FOR f=0 TO nn-1:i=INT((n(0,f)MOD 1000)/100):no=tp(n(0,f
)MOD 100+(i=1)-(i=2))*-((n(0,f)MOD 100)>0):du=2^(5-INT((n(0,
f)MOD 10000)/1000)):IF INT(n(0,f)/10000)=1 THEN du=1.5*du EL
SE IF INT(n(0,f)/10000)=2 THEN du=1.75*du
1320 POKE 30000+f*2,no MOD 256:POKE 30001+f*2,INT(no/256):PO
KE 32000+f,du
1330 i=INT((n(1,f)MOD 1000)/100):no=bp(n(1,f)MOD 100+(i=1)-(
i=2))*-((n(1,f)MOD 100)>0):du=2^(5-INT((n(1,f)MOD 10000)/100
0)):IF INT(n(1,f)/10000)=1 THEN du=1.5*du ELSE IF INT(n(1,f)
/10000)=2 THEN du=1.75*du
1340 POKE 33000+f*2,no MOD 256:POKE 33001+f*2,INT(no/256):PO
KE 35000+f,du:NEXT
1350 CLS#2
1360 bn=0:tn=0
1370 ON SQ(1) GOSUB 1410
1380 ON SQ(4) GOSUB 1420
1390 IF bn<nn OR tn<nn THEN 1370
1400 GOTO 1660
1410 SOUND 1,PEEK(30000+tn*2)+256*PEEK(30001+tn*2),PEEK(3200
0+tn)*tempo,7:tn=tn+1:RETURN
1420 SOUND 4,PEEK(33000+bn*2)+256*PEEK(33001+bn*2),PEEK(3500
0+bn)*tempo,7:bn=bn+1:RETURN
1430 IF nn=0 THEN 1260
1440 CLS#2:PRINT#2," Press A to save as  ";" an ASCII file (
for  ";" use with this          ";" program),or B to    ";" sav
e as a Binary    ";" File(for use with-  ";" out this progra
m)    "
1450 a$=UPPER$(INKEY$):IF a$<>"A" AND a$<>"B" THEN 1450
1460 CLS#2:IF a$="A" THEN PRINT#2,"ASCII File" ELSE PRINT#2,
"Binary File"
1470 PRINT#2,,,"   Enter filename":INPUT#2,na$
1480 WINDOW SWAP 0,2
1490 IF a$="B" THEN GOTO 1550
1500 OPENOUT na$
1510 FOR f=0 TO nn-1:PRINT#9,n(0,f),n(1,f):NEXT
1520 CLOSEOUT
1530 WINDOW SWAP 0,2
1540 GOTO 1660
1550 FOR f=0 TO nn-1:POKE 36000+f*6,PEEK(30000+f*2):POKE 360
01+f*6,PEEK(30001+f*2):POKE 36002+f*6,PEEK(32000+f):POKE 360
03+f*6,PEEK(33000+f*2):POKE 36004+f*6,PEEK(33001+f*2):POKE 3
6005+f*6,PEEK(35000+f):NEXT
1560 SAVE na$,b,36000,nn*6-1
1570 GOTO 1530
1580 CLS#2:PRINT#2,"   Enter filename":INPUT#2,na$
1590 WINDOW SWAP 0,2
1600 OPENIN na$
1610 INPUT#9,n(0,nn),n(1,nn):nn=nn+1
1620 IF EOF=0 THEN 1610
1630 WINDOW SWAP 0,2
1640 CLOSEIN:GOTO 1660
1650 nn=0
1660 TAGOFF:CLS:CLS#1:CLS#2
1670 PEN#2,3:PRINT#2,"MENU","~~~~"
1680 PRINT#2,," 1) Enter music",," 2) Change music",," 3) Pl
ay music",," 4) Clear memory",," 5) Save music",," 6) Load m
usic"
1690 a$=INKEY$:IF a$<"1" OR a$>"6" THEN 1690
1700 ON VAL(a$) GOTO 180,930,1260,1650,1430,1580
1710 PEN#1,3:PRINT#1,,,CHR$(7);"                   MEMORY  FULL"
1720 FOR f=1 TO 1000:NEXT
1730 GOTO 1660
```

REWARD

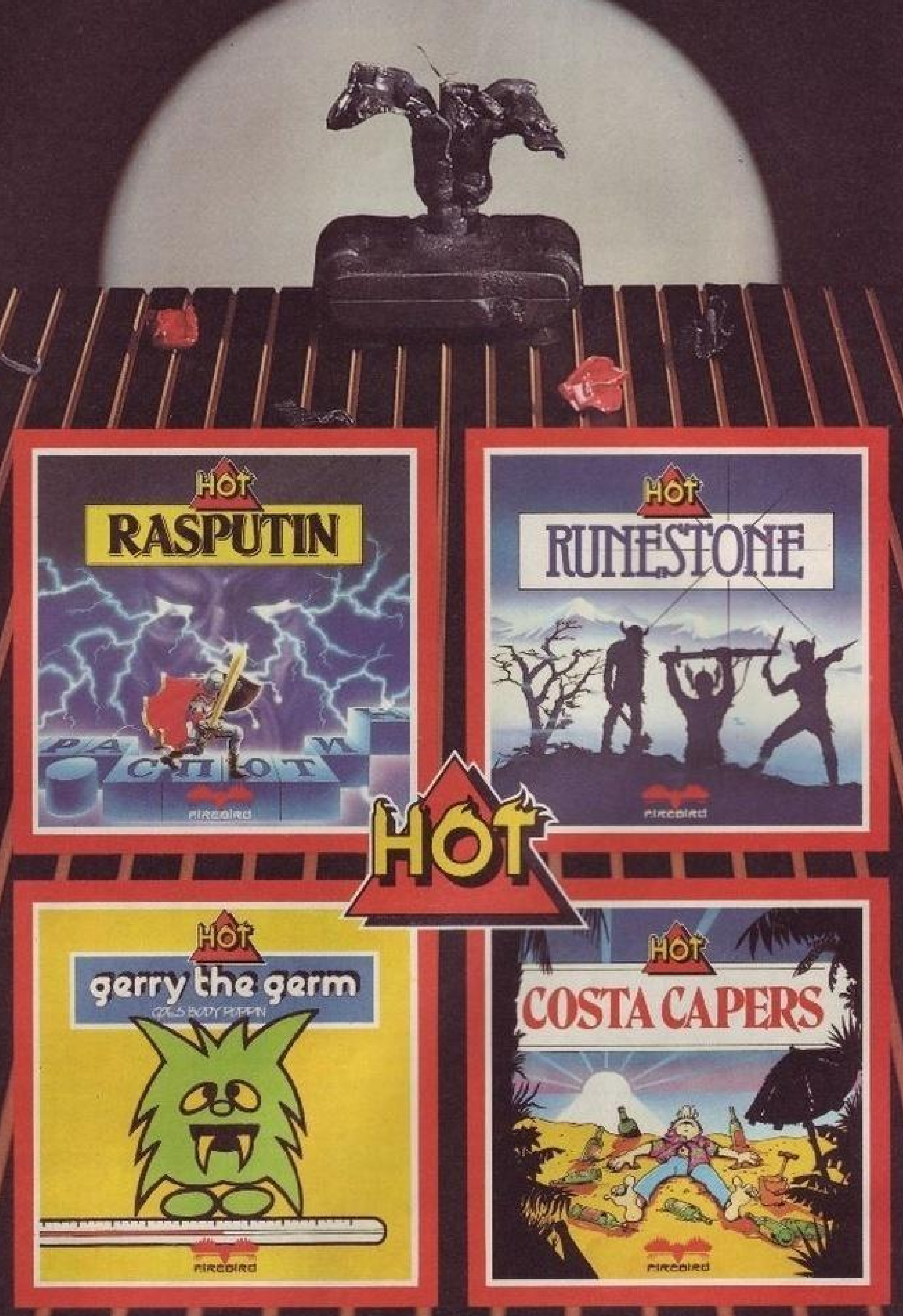
We're offering anything between £50 and £100 to readers who submit listings that are printed in Amstrad Action. Ideally, any programs you submit should be pretty short so that a print-out does not fill more than two pages at the most.

We're particularly interested in short utility programs that other readers will find easy to key in and useful or informative to run. But if you're a games writer, don't despair – if your program is top quality and not too long it stands a good chance of being accepted.

Submissions should be o tape or disc, accompanied by print-out and a stamped, self addressed envelope. Send them to: **Listings Editor, Amstrad Ac tion, Valeside, Somerton, Some rset T11 7PS.**


'DEAR, DEAR MORE CREATIVE USE OF WHITE SPACE'
'STILL, LETS SEE WHAT WE CAN DO – C'MON LADS'

DYNAMITE!



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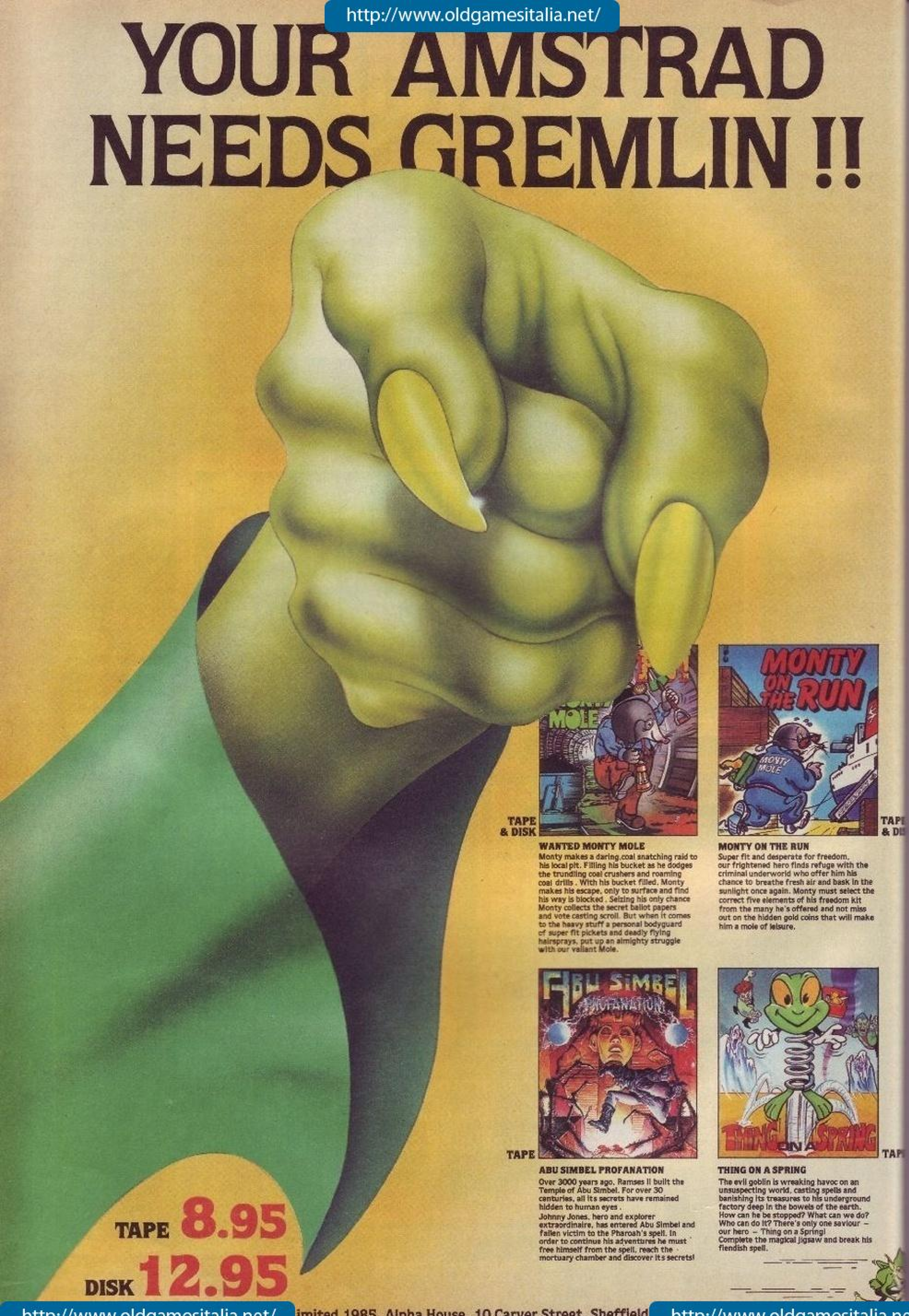

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TAPE
& DISK

WANTED MONTY MOLE

Monty makes a daring,coal snatching raid to his local pit. Filling his bucket as he dodges the trundling coal crushers and roaming coal drills . With his bucket filled, Monty makes his escape, only to surface and find his way is blocked . Seizing his only chance Monty collects the secret ballot papers and vote casting scroll. But when it comes to the heavy stuff a personal bodyguard of super fit pickets and deadly flying hairsprays, put up an almighty struggle with our valiant Mole.

TAP
& DI

MONTY ON THE RUN

Super fit and desperate for freedom, our frightened hero finds refuge with the criminal underworld who offer him his chance to breathe fresh air and bask in the sunlight once again. Monty must select the correct five elements of his freedom kit from the many he's offered and not miss out on the hidden gold coins that will make him a mole of leisure.

TAPE

ABU SIMBEL PROFANATION

Over 3000 years ago, Ramses II built the Temple of Abu Simbel. For over 30 centuries, all its secrets have remained hidden to human eyes .

Johnny Jones, hero and explorer extraordinaire, has entered Abu Simbel and fallen victim to the Pharoah's spell. In order to continue his adventures he must free himself from the spell, reach the mortuary chamber and discover its secrets!

TAP

THING ON A SPRING

The evil goblin is wreaking havoc on an unsuspecting world, casting spells and banishing its treasures to his underground factory deep in the bowels of the earth. How can he be stopped? What can we do? Who can do it? There's only one saviour – our hero – Thing on a Spring! Complete the magical jigsaw and break his fiendish spell.

TAPE **8.95**

DISK **12.95**

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THE ALL-ACTION REVIEWING SYSTEM

ACTION TEST

Hot? These games are boiling! There might be a few less raves than in some previous months – but just look at the quality. *Elite* gains the coveted Mastergame slot, as everybody suspected it would. It's a massive game that will keep you going until next Christmas.

The Raves, though, weren't far behind. We think they're of such exceptional quality that they merited a front cover to themselves. There's something for everybody in this issue, and all of it knockout stuff. The only problem we can see is in deciding which ones you can't afford.

1. EXPERT GAMEPLAY. No game gets written up until it's had a long and thorough test. Take software editor Bob Wade. Despite his tender years (not to mention sore trigger finger), he's pretty deadly with a joystick and happens to have played virtually every Amstrad game ever released. As they say down these parts, BW reaches the parts other reviewers can't touch.

2. EXTRA OPINIONS. It's always dangerous to rely on just one reviewer – tastes vary enormously. So all the games we review get looked at by at least two people, many of them by three. Not only does this mean you can read an additional view under the 'Second opinion' heading, it also means that our ratings are more reliable, because they're arrived at by a process of debate among those concerned.

Incidentally we're now extending this principle even further by seeking out YOUR opinions and ratings on new games. Read the Ed lines page for details of a scheme which will turn our review pages into a living forum of Amstrad owners.

3. LABELLED SCREEN SHOTS. It's obviously important to print screen-shots, but often they can be hard to make sense of. Labelling the different elements can make all the difference (even though the art department kick up an incredible fuss about the extra work – oh, they do.)

4. CLEAR SUMMARIES. Ever read a review where you ended up pretty unsure of the reviewer's overall opinion? To make our own views absolutely clear we include a concise summary of them under the Good news/Bad news headings.

5. RATINGS BOXES. We rate our games using percentages for extra flexibility and precision. And with so many games to work through, it's a help to be able to see at a glance which are good and which aren't. Our ratings boxes do this – just look out for those featuring long bars with dark tips!

Page after page of sensational game reviews

MASTERGAME

Elite	Firebird	**50**

AA RAVES

Nightshade	Ultimate	**36**
Theatre Europe	PSS	**44**
Tornado Low Level	Vortex	**48**
Sweevo's World	Gargoyle	**48**
Barry McGuigan's Boxing	Activision	**54**

GAMES TESTED

Wriggler	Blaby	**40**
The Bells	Blaby	**40**
Jumpman	Blaby	**41**
Spitfire 40	Mirrorsoft	**42**
Atlantis	Anirog	**44**
Death Wake	Quicksilva	**46**
Gyroscope	Melbourne House	**54**
Life Expectancy Zero	Blaby	**55**
Tim Love's Cricket	Peaksoft	**56**
Caves of Doom	Mastertronic	**58**
REM	Blaby	**58**
The Hustler	Bubble Bus	**58**
Magic	Macmillan	**59**
Aladdin's Cave	Artic	**60**
Endurance	CRL	**60**
Quiz Quest	Alligata	**61**

AA Ratings – how they work –

We've come up with five different headings which, we reckon, cover all that's important about a game. The most important is the final one which represents our overall assessment of it. Games which score 80% or higher earn the much sought after label of AA RAVE, while the highest rated game in any month becomes our MASTERGAME – we go through agonies before selecting that one.

The ratings categories are meant to be fairly self-explanatory, but that wasn't why we didn't print anything about them last issue – we just ran out of space! So here are the missing explanations. Hopefully you'll agree our categories make a refreshing change from the usual.

GRAPHICS is the first category. Basically, this means..er..what the game looks like; colour, definition, animation, imagination. It's safe to say that monochrome Noughts and Crosses will score fairly low.

SONICS next. Sweet music, horrible noise, silence, all will be rated on quality and quantity. This rating involves the use of ears.

GRAB FACTOR We think you'll like this one. Does the game really GRAB you? Are you hooked? Will you miss an episode of The Archers to play it? High Grab Factor means that the whole office abandons work. Bob Wade whoops with delight and even the publisher looks mildly pleased. 100% means the game is more addictive than cider.

STAYING POWER You may have got the habit, but how long are you going to keep it? Staying Power tells you how often you're likely to return to a game. That depends on such matters as the number of screens and levels, the variety of the task, the degree of long-term challenge. An addictive game with only a couple of screens to it will get a high Grab Factor and low Staying Power, one with a 1000-screen playing area but lacking in playability would be the other way round.

AA RATING Nothing to do with cars. This is the result of a very hard sum involving all the other ratings, plus factors like price, quality of packaging and instructions, reliability and any other relevant factors we can think of. You won't go far wrong with any game over 80%.

Compatibility

All games reviewed in this issue are compatible across all three machines, with the exception of Anirog's *Atlantis*, which runs only on the CPC464

AA RAVE

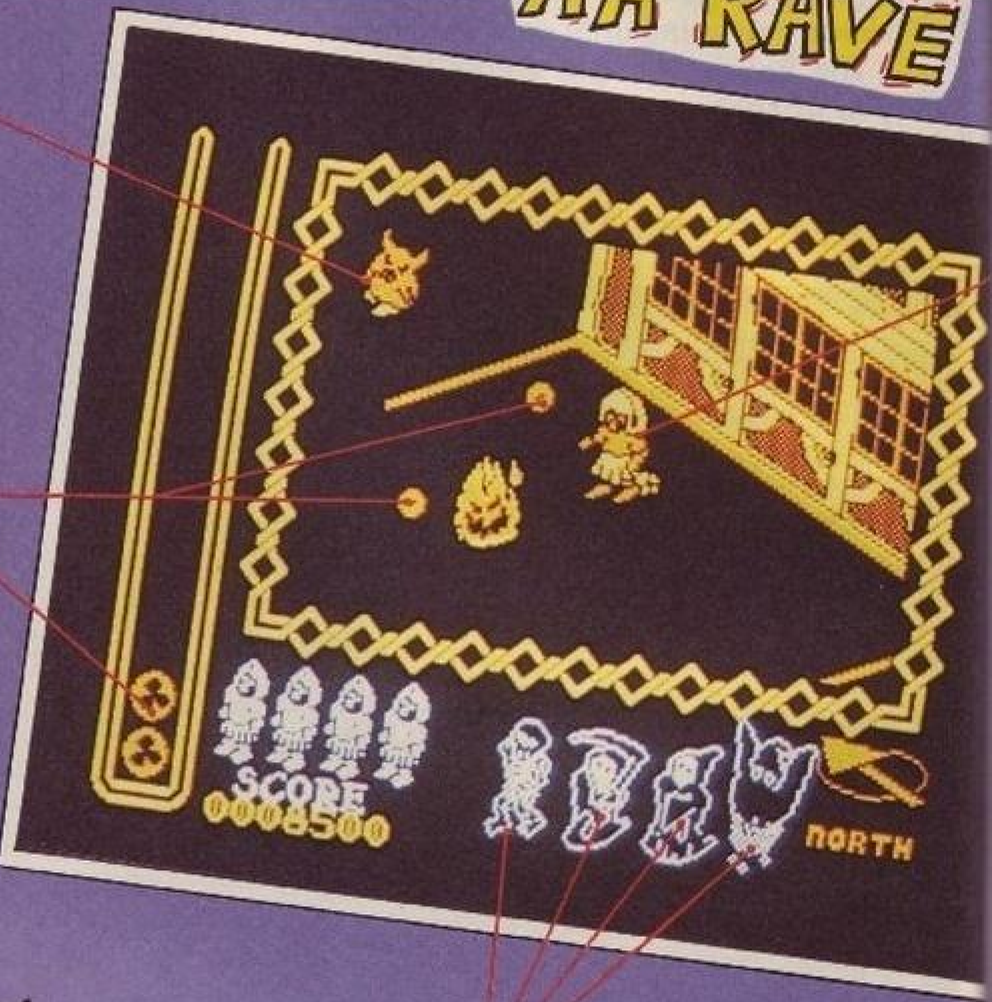
NIGHTSHADE

Ultimate, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

This long-awaited successor to *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8* has taken the "filmation" graphics technique used by Ultimate one stage further and introduced scrolling. Gone are the jumping and puzzle solving that confronted you in the previous games but in are shooting and exploring an even larger game area.

The game is set in the village of Nightshade which has been overrun by hordes of evil beings. The village is made up of over 500 locations viewed diagonally from the south-west and from a point above the action. The locations are composed of lots of blank space with houses marked by attractive facades. There are also cloisters and most of these buildings can be walked into through doorways. When you do this the wall that would otherwise block the view disappears to leave a bare room.

Sabreman is once again the hero and wanders around in his usual well- animated style, turning his head to look at things and shooting. His task is to free the village from the evil that plagues it by destroying the four menacing figures who prowl the streets in search of human blood. They are a skeleton, ghost, mad monk and Mr Grimreaper who all have to be bumped off using a specific object.



One of the many monsters

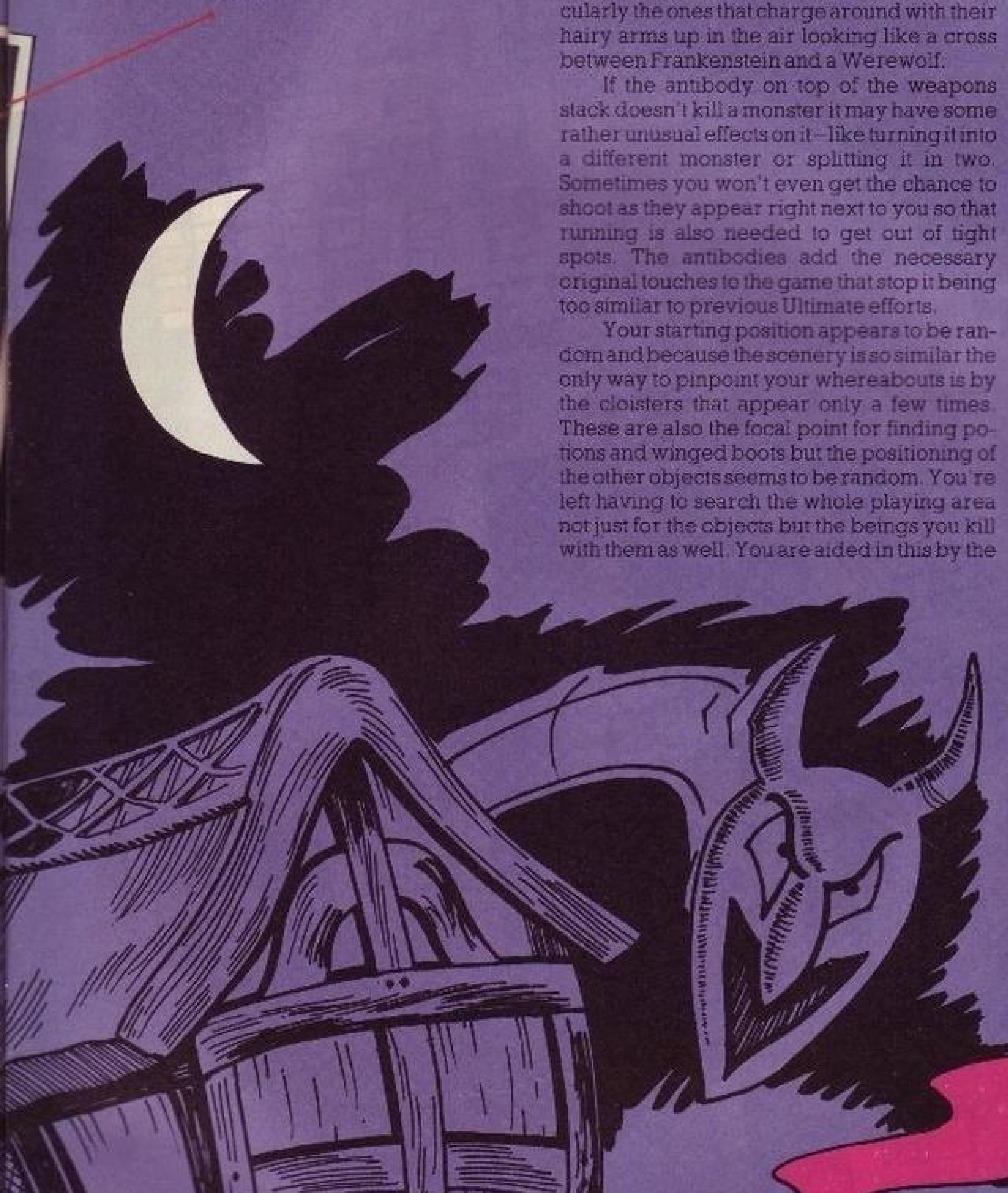
Antibodies

The four evil ones

> **SECOND OPINION**
>
> *I was prepared to be disappointed with this game, having suspected that it would be drearily similar to its predecesors. But – astonishment! I found it one of the most enjoyable Ultimate games I've ever failed miserably to solve. The graphics are simply stunning, even if Sabreman still moves as if the only footwear he owns is a pair of snowshoes.*
>
> *Most impressive – and funniest – are the mutant monsters: hit 'em with the wrong antibody and the do a quick change into mohican hair-styled punk monsters waving their arms around in anguish.*
>
> *Patience is certainly a greater virtue than brainwork in this game, which might make it less attractive for addicted puzzlers. For me it was a bonus.*
>
> **PC**

There are six non-moving objects that Sabreman can pick up: a bible, cross, egg-timer, hammer, potion bottle and winged boots. The last two have the effect of curing ills and making you move faster. The other four objects are stored in a stack along with antibodies that can also be picked up. These are found in all the rooms but move about so that you have to chase after them to pick them up.

The other moving objects are highly dangerous, though, since these are the monsters that have been created by the evil ones. If Sabreman bumps into them they cause damage and three hits will kill off one of his lives. They can be stopped by using the anti-



Sabreman

bodies but things are complicated by the fact that not all antibodies will kill all creatures. Each monster is delightfully animated, particularly the ones that charge around with their hairy arms up in the air looking like a cross between Frankenstein and a Werewolf.

If the antibody on top of the weapons stack doesn't kill a monster it may have some rather unusual effects on it – like turning it into a different monster or splitting it in two. Sometimes you won't even get the chance to shoot as they appear right next to you so that running is also needed to get out of tight spots. The antibodies add the necessary original touches to the game that stop it being too similar to previous Ultimate efforts.

Your starting position appears to be random and because the scenery is so similar the only way to pinpoint your whereabouts is by the cloisters that appear only a few times. These are also the focal point for finding potions and winged boots but the positioning of the other objects seems to be random. You're left having to search the whole playing area not just for the objects but the beings you kill with them as well. You are aided in this by the object flashing when you are near the correct character.

Initially the graphics are stunning and exploring is quite exciting but as you discover there are no puzzles things start to get samey. The gameplay becomes simple arcade action of exploring and shooting and getting lucky in finding things quickly. This makes it much less absorbing than the previous games but it is still just as tough to complete. Certainly not as good as Ultimate's previous releases but an excellent game nonetheless.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Marvellously designed characters.**
- **Excellent animation and scrolling.**
- **Great touches in antibodies and their effects.**
- **Large complicated playing area.**
- **Very difficult game task.**

BAD NEWS

- **Locations acn be very bare at times.**
- **No puzzles to tease the mind.**
- **Takes ages to load.**

GRAPHICS	96%
SONICS	55%
GRAB FACTOR	91%
STAYING POWER	78%
A A RATING	85%

Anti-monster antibodies

There are four types of antibody and nine different monsters to kill off. Five of these can be killed off by any antibody but the other four (all demons) may mutate. So here's a list of monsters and what kills them.

ZOMBIE DEMON (hands in the air): killed by spiral antibody.

WATER DEMON (raged teeth and spiky head): killed by spiked ball antibody.

HORNED DEMON (two horns on his head): killed by rotating stick antibody.

VAMPIRE DEMON (two big teeth): killed by pulsating button antibody.

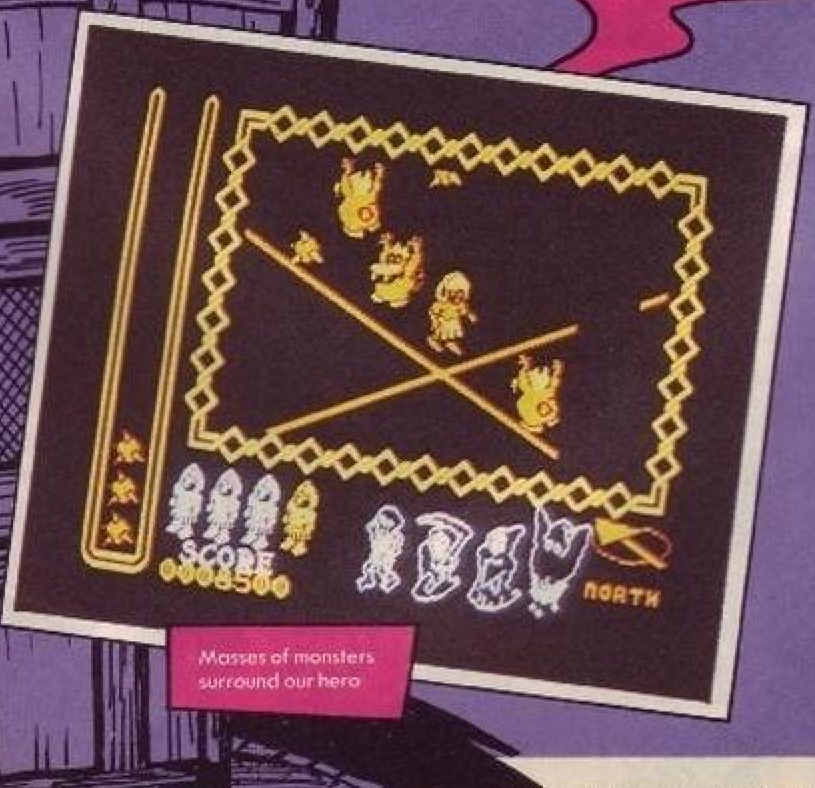
FIREBALL: any antibody.

ACID POOL: any antibody.

PULSATING MUSHROOM: any antibody.

SPIKED DISC: any antibody.

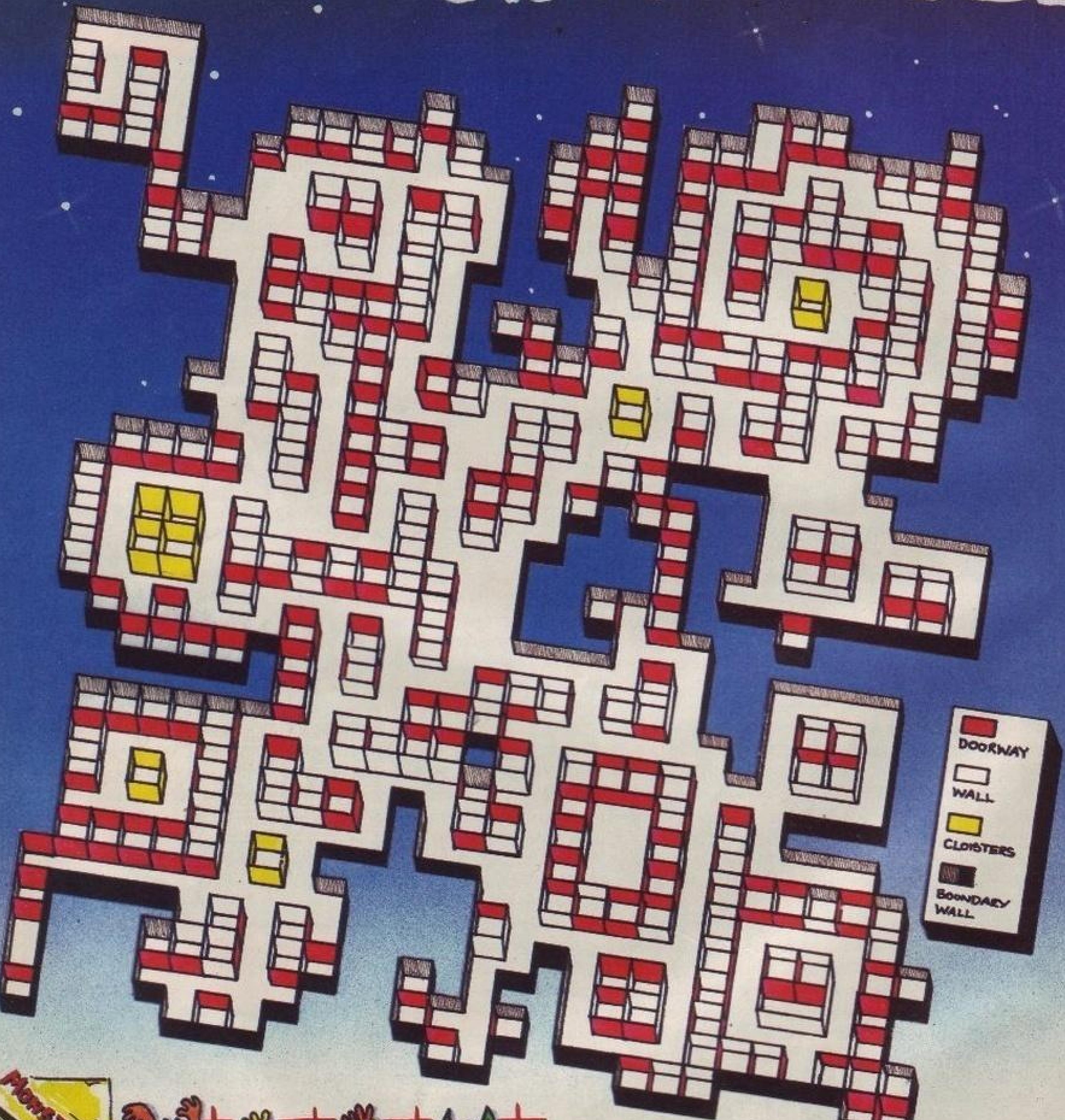
SPIRIT (ball of dots): any antibody.

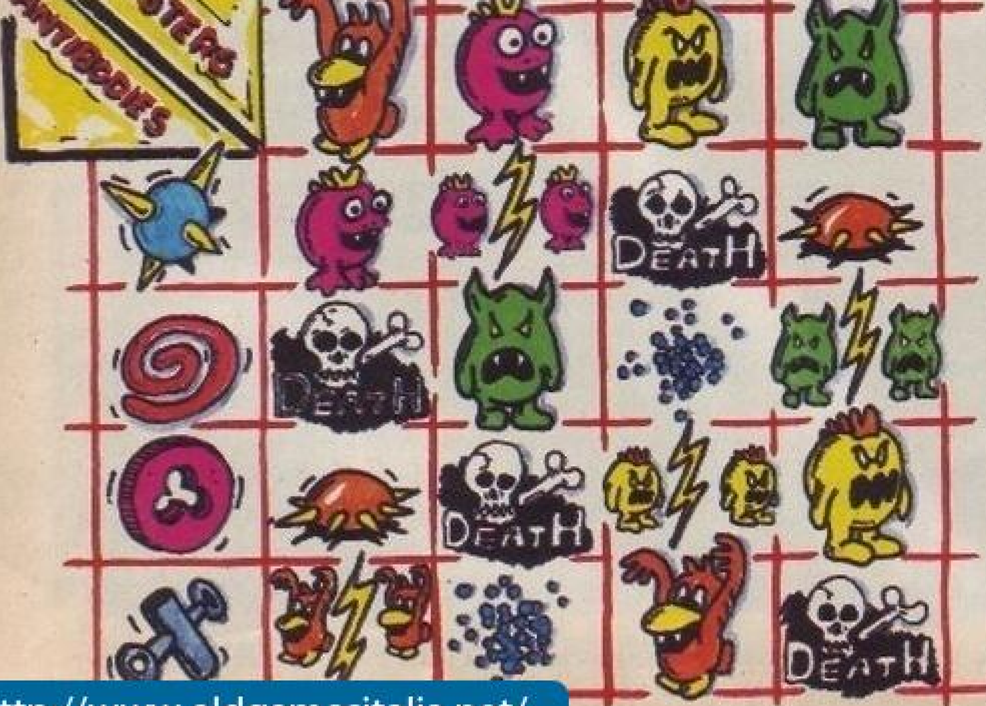


Masses of monsters surround our hero

An Amstrad Action MEGA-MAP

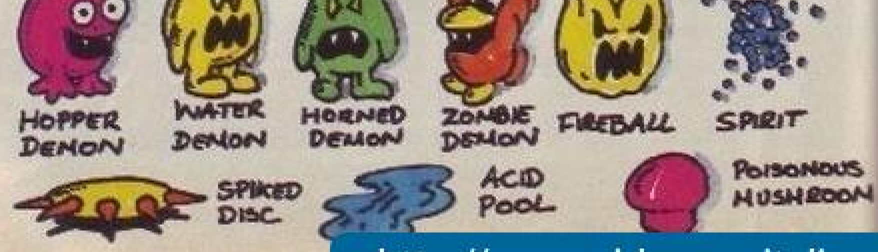
NIGHTSHADE


DOORWAY
WALL
CLOISTERS
BOONDARY WALL


MONSTERS
ANTIBODIES
DEATH
DEATH
DEATH
DEATH

MAPPED BY
JASON MARTIN

MONSTER MASHERS' GUIDE


HOPPER DEMON
WATER DEMON
HORNED DEMON
ZOMBIE DEMON
FIREBALL
SPIRIT
SPIKED DISC
ACID POOL
POISONOUS MUSHROOM

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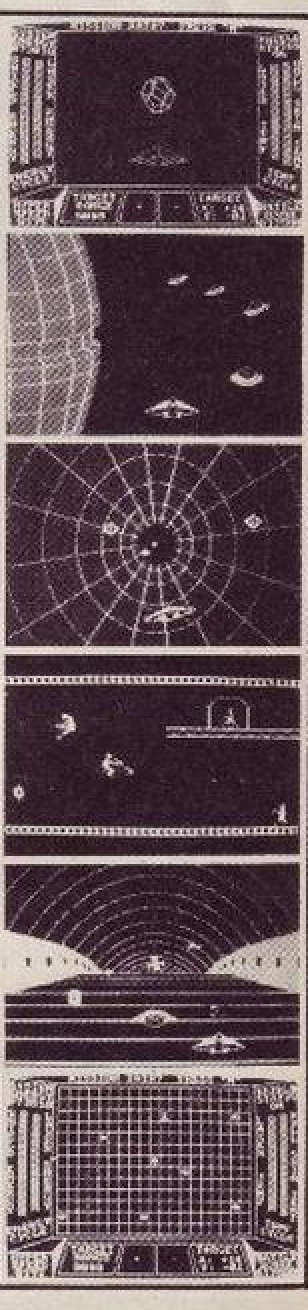

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WRIGGLER

Blaby Computer Games, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

No, this isn't a repeat review of last month's exploration game offering from Romantic Robot but a version of the arcade game *Centipede* starring even more creepy crawlies and garden horrors. It's a grand old shoot-em-up which offers plenty of fast action and difficulty.

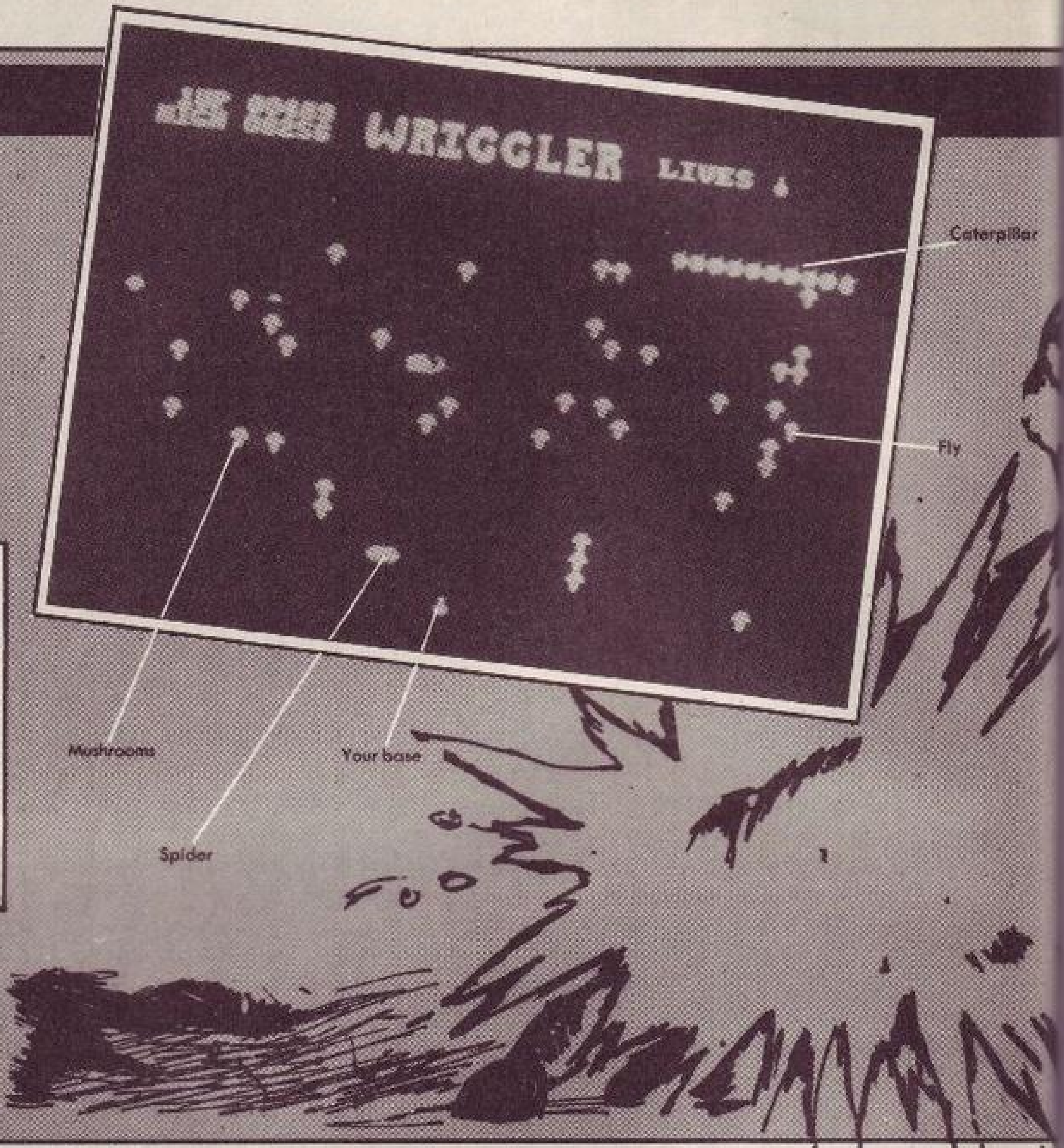
The essence of the game is that a caterpillar appears at the top of the screen while at the bottom is your base which you use to blast away the segments of the caterpillar. That's all you have to do – but there are lots of other pesky little insects about who have some nasty tricks up their antennae.

SECOND OPINION

OK Wade. So there's no intellectual challenge, eh? Well, so what? You don't pick up the joystick for a game of Centipede *when you're in the mood for thinking. You play this game in a spirit of mindless destruction. Frantic zapping is what it's all about, and as such* Wriggler *gets my vote.*

PC

The screen is dotted with mushrooms which serve several purposes but mostly just get in your way. The caterpillar will bounce off them as it moves down the screen line by line, sometimes charging quickly down a tunnel of them, at others getting temporarily



THE BELLS

Blaby Computer Games, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

As if poor old Quasimodo hadn't suffered enough in computer games he's been resurrected yet again to try to rescue his girlfriend from across 15 screens of battlement action. There are already two version of the game on the Amstrad. This third one doesn't measure up to the others even though it's cheaper.

Each of the 15 screens represents a section of battlement which Quasi has to make his way along from left to right to reach a bell at the other side which takes him to the next screen. There are a number of obstacles that face him on each screen which have to be jumped over. There is also a time limit on each screen in which you have to get to the other side.

SECOND OPINION

There's little to say about a game as dire as this except the comment Quasimodo himself utters when falling from the battlements: 'Aaaaaaaargh!'

PC

The obstacles that face him include barrels and arrows that fly across the screen towards him and. If hit by them Quasi bites the dust with the words "arghhh" popping onto the screen. There can also be gaps in the floor which have to be jumped over, otherwise you plummet downwards, again to the complement of an on-screen "ahhhhhhhhh". Large gaps over flaming pits have to be traversed by grabbing a swinging rope over it and leaping off at the other side.

Another difficult problem is the guards who stand in some of the smaller gaps and from time to time thrust a spear up into the air. This combination of events is the major problem so that other difficulties might be gaps with moving objects or guards and moving objects.

The big problem with the game is the control of Quasi, which is difficult to say the least. It is tough to calculate when to jump and the response to the fire button is often very sluggish. The graphics also leave a lot to be desired and I've heard less irritating sound effects in my time.

BW

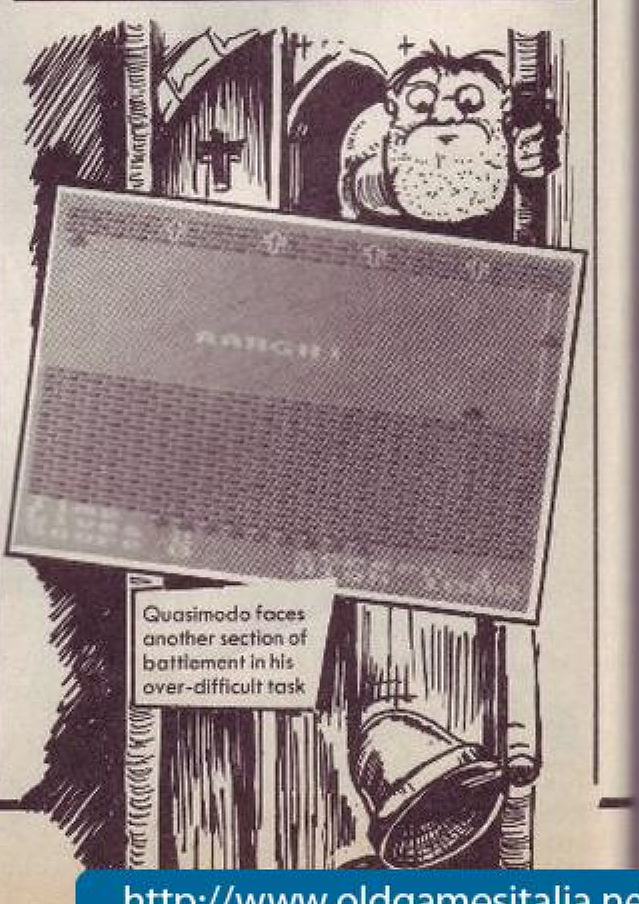
GOOD NEWS

- ► **It's cheaper than other *Hunchback* games.**

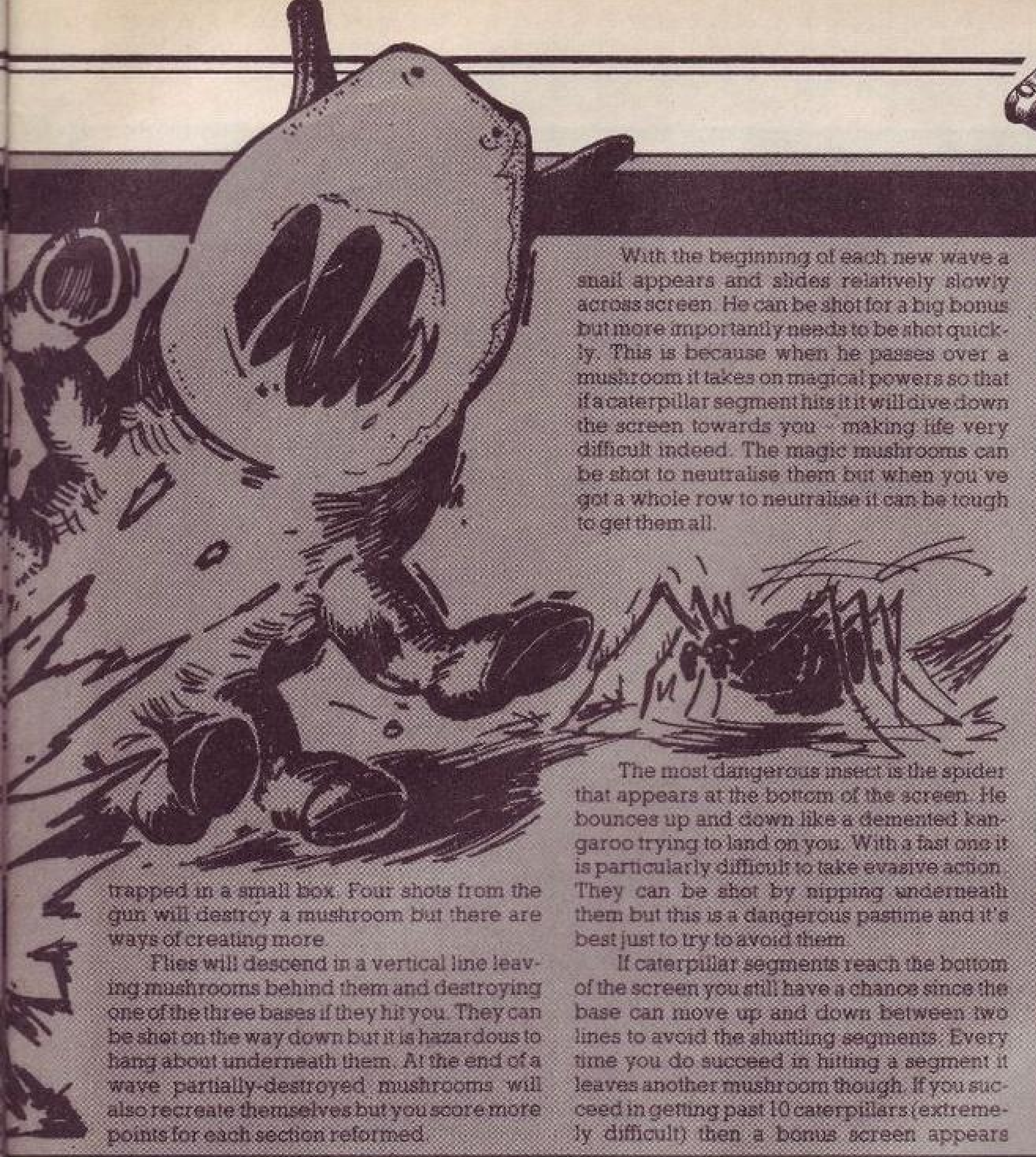
BAD NEWS

- ► **Very unoriginal.**
- ► **Difficult control and timing.**
- ► **Crude graphics.**
- ► **Two better games have been on the market for some time.**

GRAPHICS	30%
SONICS	39%
GRAB FACTOR	22%
STAYING POWER	31%
A A RATING	26%



Quasimodo faces another section of battlement in his over-difficult task



trapped in a small box. Four shots from the gun will destroy a mushroom but there are ways of creating more.

Flies will descend in a vertical line leaving mushrooms behind them and destroying one of the three bases if they hit you. They can be shot on the way down but it is hazardous to hang about underneath them. At the end of a wave partially-destroyed mushrooms will also recreate themselves but you score more points for each section reformed.

With the beginning of each new wave a snail appears and slides relatively slowly across screen. He can be shot for a big bonus but more importantly needs to be shot quickly. This is because when he passes over a mushroom it takes on magical powers so that if a caterpillar segment hits it it will dive down the screen towards you – making life very difficult indeed. The magic mushrooms can be shot to neutralise them but when you've got a whole row to neutralise it can be tough to get them all.

The most dangerous insect is the spider that appears at the bottom of the screen. He bounces up and down like a demented kangaroo trying to land on you. With a fast one it is particularly difficult to take evasive action. They can be shot by nipping underneath them but this is a dangerous pastime and it's best just to try to avoid them.

If caterpillar segments reach the bottom of the screen you still have a chance since the base can move up and down between two lines to avoid the shuttling segments. Every time you do succeed in hitting a segment it leaves another mushroom though. If you succeed in getting past 10 caterpillars (extremely difficult) then a bonus screen appears where you can play a game of *Snake*. Here you control the caterpillar as he picks up fruit that makes his body longer.

The action is terrifically demanding and fast leaving no room for error. The graphics and sound effects are reasonable – Bbut don't expect to get anything more out of this game than a few hours of heavy and satisfying blasting.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Gets extremely tough.**
- **Novel little features like snails.**
- **Very fast, demanding action.**
- **First version of *Centipede* for Arnold.**
- **Good price.**

BAD NEWS

- **Highly unoriginal.**
- **Spider is very annoying when it arrives at high speed.**
- **No intellectual challenge.**

GRAPHICS	56%
SONICS	48%
GRAB FACTOR	77%
STAYING POWER	72%
A A RATING	76%

JUMPMAN

Blaby Computer Games, £1.99, joystick or keys

This is a version of the old arcade game *Q*Bert*, in which you have to jump around various geometrical shapes colouring in the blocks that comprise it. At the same time you are pursued by an opponent who will terminate you with extreme prejudice if he catches you.

In this version you are called Hubert-C-Jumpman. You are a violent pink colour and are lumbered with a huge nose. Your pursuer is Felix the Flatner, who is equally pink and suffers from an equally overgrown proboscis.

You begin on a blue pyramid which hangs, like all the structures in the game, on a background of deep space. It looks very pretty, although the colours are a little on the vibrant side. As in all games of this type, movement is diagonal – you will probably find that the keys give you a better chance, as the joystick can be slightly unresponsive.

It's pretty easy to figure out the route Frank will take on this screen, so there's little difficulty in progressing to the second – unless you get too enthusiastic and leap off the edge into the the wilds of space.

The next structure is almost a square, but it has some tricky holes in it to make you think a bit more about where you're going. This time, though, it's yellow.

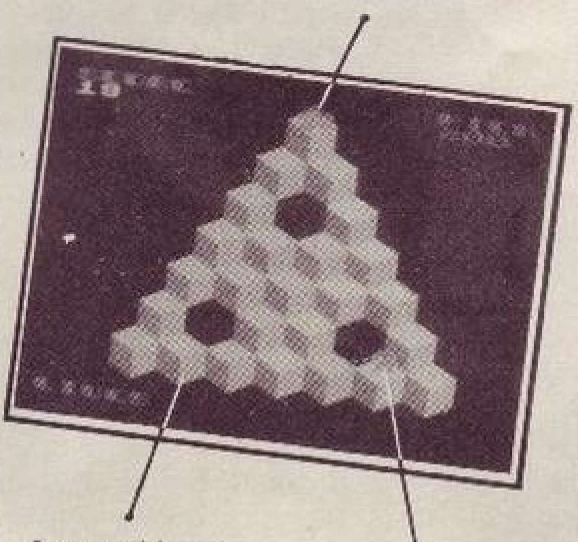
And so you go on, with different structures of different colours, bouncing around to colour each square. There are only six screens, and the pursuers will increase by one each time you complete them. *Jumpman* is by no means a bad version of *Q*Bert* – the graphics are pretty slick, the sound is suitably springy and the whole thing is carried off with a certain amount of panache. But it must be said that it isn't quite in the class of Microbyte's *ErBert*. However, it is a budget game. You pays you money and you takes your choice.

PC

SECOND OPINION

The character graphics are very disappointing and could have benn much better with a little more colour. Control is annoying because it takes time to respond, but holding down a key or joystick direction will send you shooting off the layout. But the designs are good, and prove testing – so it could keep you at it for some time.

BW



GOOD NEWS

- **Colourful and noisy.**
- **Cheap.**

BAD NEWS

- **Only six screens.**
- **Control can be difficult.**

GRAPHICS	51%
SONICS	42%
GRAB FACTOR	39%
STAYING POWER	42%
A A RATING	40%

'I'M GLAD I'M DOWN HERE AND THAT SPIDERS UP THERE!'

SPITFIRE 40

Mirrorsoft, £9.95 cass, £14.95 disk, joystick with keys or keys

You've already had your chance to drive a steam train. Now all the nostalgics can slip into the cockpit of a Spitfire and thunder through the skies of southern England in pursuit of enemy planes. It's a straightforward flight simulator with combat thrown in to give you something to do instead of just flying around.

The basic aim of the game is to complete missions in which you have to take-off from an airfield in south-east England, locate a group of enemy aircraft, shoot them down and return to land at an airfield. This is of course much easier said than done and lots of practice will be needed in the various stages of the game.

There are three different flight modes which you can select and the best place to start is practice, where you can familiarize yourself with the flight controls. These are all contained on an instrument panel that fills the screen. You can switch between this and two other screens: the view through the cockpit and a radar map of the surrounding area.

The controls and indicators are the ones you would expect to find on a flight simulator. Namely: flaps, undercarriage, brake, rudder, fuel level, attitude, air speed, altimeter, artificial horizon, compass, vertical speed, revs and slip and turn indicator. Naturally you don't have to watch or control all of these at once but familiarity with the gauges, so that a quick eye can be scanned over them, is essential. The other flying controls of the Spitfire are simply dive, climb and roll actions with a fire button to operate your twin machine guns.

Having mastered the flying you can go on to combat practice which puts you in the air with a never ending string of enemy planes to be shot down. Here the techniques of evasion and shooting skill can be perfected rady for the real thing.

Combat combines the two training sequences so that you have to take-off and track down some enemy fighters from their bearing and height. A map will also help you locate them. You can zoom in on various sections to see them in greater detail. Failure can come in many ways like crashing the plane, overstretching its capabilities or being shot down. If you succeed you've got to get back to an airfield before the fuel runs out and complete one of the hardest parts of the game – the landing.

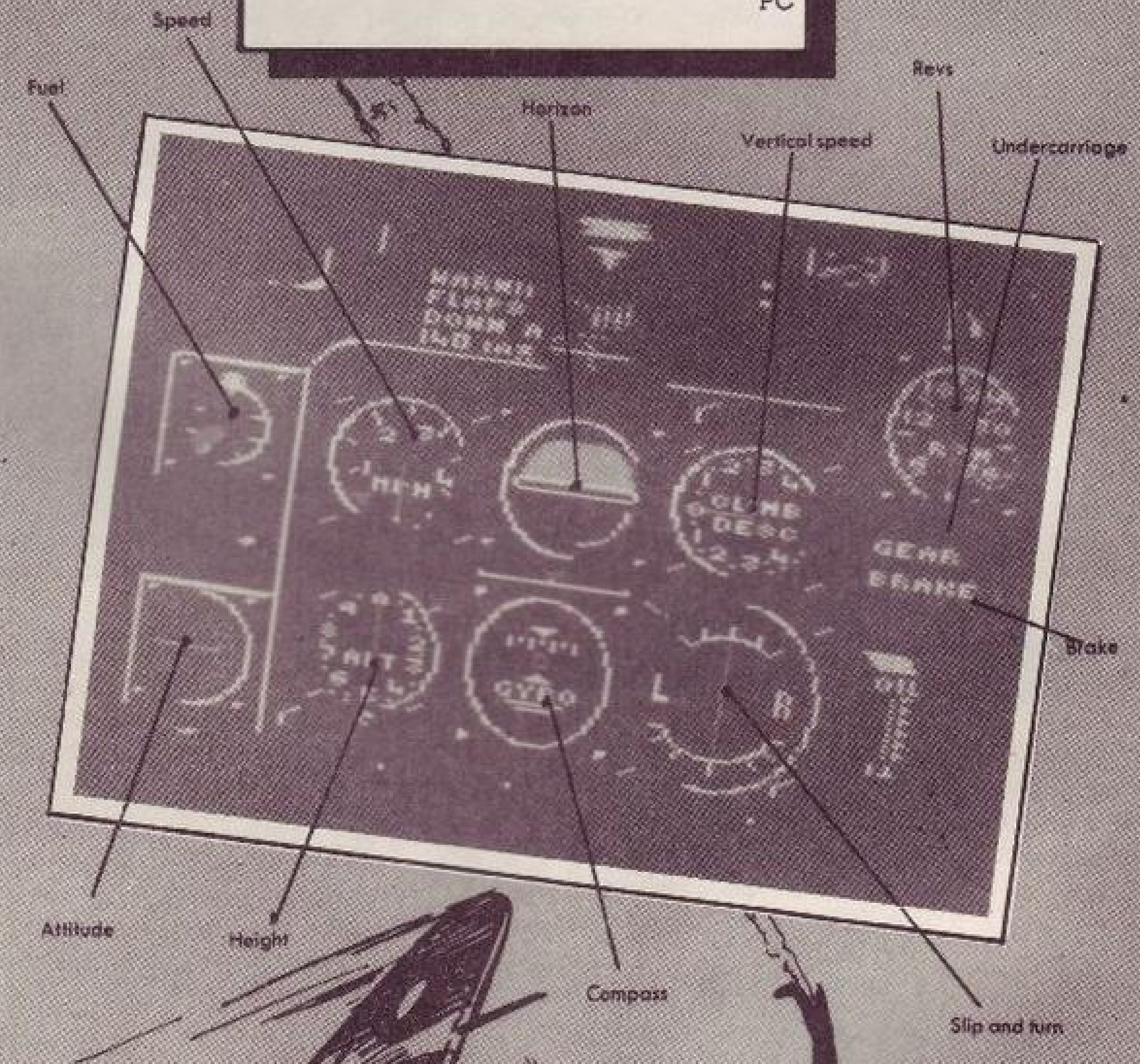
The instrument panel graphics are detailed and attractive, while the screen update through the cockpit is reasonably fast. The mission task is demanding so the ability to save the game after a succesful mission means you can gratifyingly build up a record under your pilot name. The engine noise when flying is good although the title music is a bit monotonous.

BW

SECOND OPINION

Well, it wasn't quite my 'finest hour' playing this game, but it's enjoyable enough and I'm always happy to see a flight simulator that lets you go and shoot things. Although my dream flight simulator would be one that let you shoot things wihthout ever leaving the ground. However, given that you have to take off, Spit40 is pretty good value.

PC



GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Excellent instrument panel.**
- ▶ **Tough missions are great when completed.**
- ▶ **Good range of controls but not too confusing.**
- ▶ **Nice engine noise.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Flying around shooting things can get boring.**
- ▶ **The maps are chunky and have little detail on them.**

GRAPHICS	70%
SONICS	71%
GRAB FACTOR	70%
STAYING POWER	63%
A A RATING	68%

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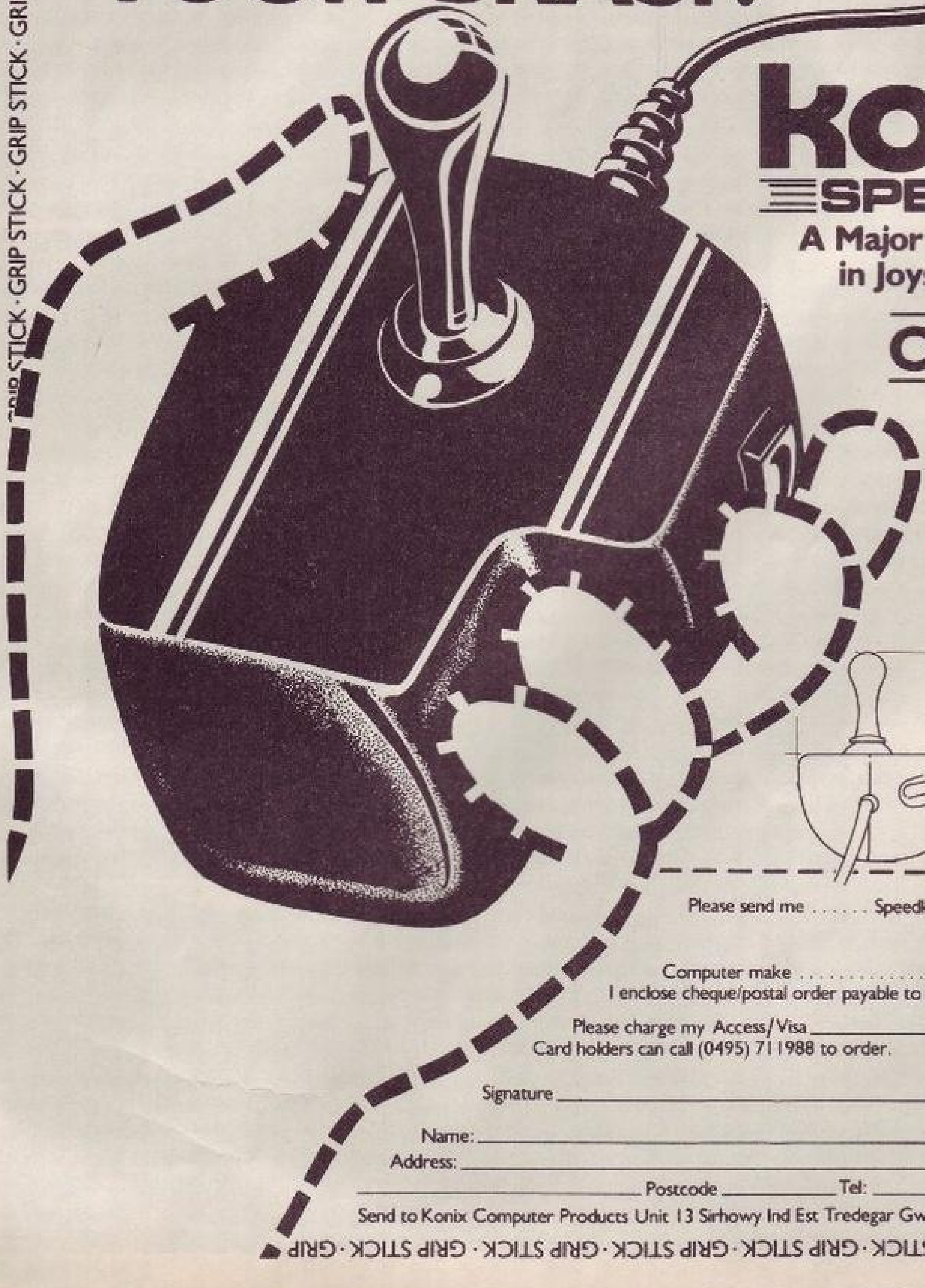

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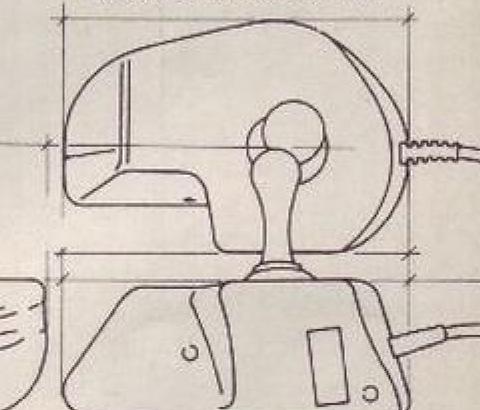

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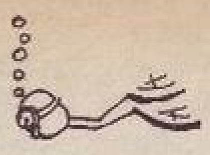


ATLANTIS

Anirog, £6.95 cass, joystick or keys

Set deep beneath the surface of the oceans in a place swarming with deadly aquatic life where Skip dives for treasure and you dive for the joystick to try to stay alive. It's one of those arcade games where the player can never relax and has to concentrate the whole time.

The sea bed is a horizontally scrolling, wraparound area split into four levels by seaweed-coated platforms. Skip the diver starts on the top level and can move between them by descending or ascending through gaps in the platforms. When he moves the whole display scrolls somewhat jerkily keeping Skip in the middle of the screen.

Skip has to collect objects that are either lying around on the platforms or swimming along one level. The two objects to be picked up on the first level are a spongey-looking creature called Cute and a sailor. He picks them up by swimming into them and once he has both is flipped to the next level.

Two things endanger skip on this level: sharks and little fish. The sharks are large blue monsters with enormous mouths and teeth which swim along and home in on Skip when he appears on their level. The fish don't home in but, like the sharks, move faster than you do. If you run into a shark it swallows poor Skip in gruesome fashion, licking its lips and bulging its eyeballs. The fish are less decorous but just as deadly.

The marine menace can be removed by shooting them with harpoons but they will keep on appearing elsewhere to chase you.

SECOND OPINION

The odd clever touch and the odd stroke of wit were no compensation for the dull gameplay. A game like this has got to be much bigger and a whole lot better to succeed these days. Frankly, I'd rather go fishing.

PC

The objects you're searching for can also be shot so watch out – this will lose a life. When the sharks are hit they crumble into a skeleton. Combined with their eating habits this is the best part of the game.

On later levels even more dangers ap-

THEATRE EUROPE

PSS, £9.95 cass, £12.95 disk, joystick or keys

This was the most politically controversial game of last year on other micros and it will be interesting to see what Amstrad owners make now of the horrors of a nuclear war simulation. The hallmark of the game is its excellent creation of atmosphere and the realistic way in which it treats the whole subject. For once a serious subject has been handled in the right manner without letting it be "just a game".

The wonderful packaging includes plenty of fictional, but all too possible, background information on the build up to a conflict in Europe. The chain of events begins with US intervention in the Middle East and from there on it deteriorates inevitably to an East-West clash with the forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact facing each other across the West German border.

The information really does immerse you in the frightening possibilities and realities of such a conflict and this continues in the program with many touches that allow no let up in the tension. The war takes place on a map of Europe on which appear the major cities, the units on both sides and the type of terrain. The player can take either the NATO or Warsaw Pact side and play against the computer or another player.

SECOND OPINION

The potential destruction of civilization hardly seems a fitting subject for a game, yet Theatre Europe *succeeds in presenting the subject not just with excitement but with sensitivity. You'll have yourelf the kind of involved strategy game expected from PSS, but you'll also be forced to think about the wider issues of superpower tension and nuclear war. Not least by that chilling phone message.*

Needless to say, the presentation of the game is of a very high standard :the accompanying material adds greatly to the background, while game graphics and sound are excellent.

PC

The conflict occurs in several phases over 30 days with all the decisions being made every two days. These break down into three basic sections of movement, attack and rebuilding for both sides. The movement phase occurs first and each unit can move one square on the map except in moutainous territory where movement is restricted. Each player can only control his own units with the few neutral armies acting independently.

The attack phase follows and any unit adjacent to an enemy unit can engage it. The result of the attack can either be decided by the computer or an arcade screen can be played to determine the results of battles all across the front. This takes place against the background of the terrain you're on and has enemy tanks, helicopters and jet planes moving across it. You control a gun which fires missiles that can be guided to their targets. Your accuracy determines the state of supply of each unit so you'll need to get good at these stages unless you skip them.

After battles you can resupply units with three things: combat strength (ARM), air support (AIR) and supplies (SUP). The amount of each depends on the date during the conflict and the actions of the enemy but, of course, it is never enough. The end of the turn lets you reallocate your air forces and also decide whether to use nuclear or chemical weapons.

The air forces can be used in many different ways for air superiority, counter air, interdiction, reconnaissance or three special missions. The aim is to achieve air dominance and thereby hamper the enemy's supply lines or make direct strikes against an enemy ground unit. The final stage of each turn is where you have to make the hardest decision as to whether to use nuclear weapons.

The procedure for this involves an authorisation code word which can be obtained by actually phoning a special number where not only will you get the code but even more atmosphere from the message that comes along with it. Single strategic launches can be made against individual targets or a massive strike across the whole front. The former is dangerous and may provoke a disastrous response, while the latter inevitably leads to total destruction.

At the end of the conflict you will get a command ability rating in percent and a message on who is winning the war. If it ends with massive nuclear strikes there is of course no winner and you'll get 0%. The instructions stress that this game must never happen for real and it does serve to remind us of the dangers. It's a very absorbing program that provides a tough strategic challenge. And it makes you think more than most games.

BW

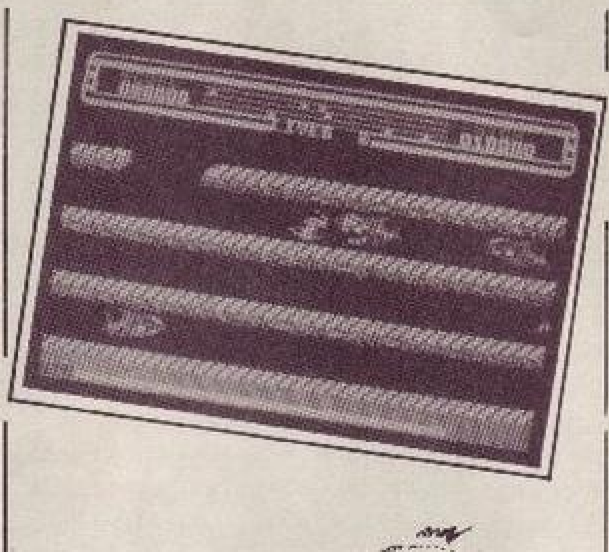
GOOD NEWS

- **Great background story and instructions.**
- **Excellent atmosphere created by packaging and game.**
- **Handles a controversial issue impartially.**
- **A difficult game to master.**
- **Good mix of strategy and arcade action if required.**

pear. The sharks are swapped for octopi and then crabs (which turn into crab paté when shot) while an additional danger is introduced in the form of Neptune. He wanders along the platforms and can change levels when he stops, banging his trident on the floor. It takes six shots to destroy him and even then he will reappear at another position in the game.

Skippy also has a problem in that he has a limited air supply in which to collect the objects. If he succeeds this will be transferred into bonus points. It's basically a panic game, similar in gameplay to *Don't Panic* from Firebird, and although it has some nice graphics and a jolly soundtrack it won't stretch most players much.

BW



Skip and his trusty harpoon are about to be shark bait

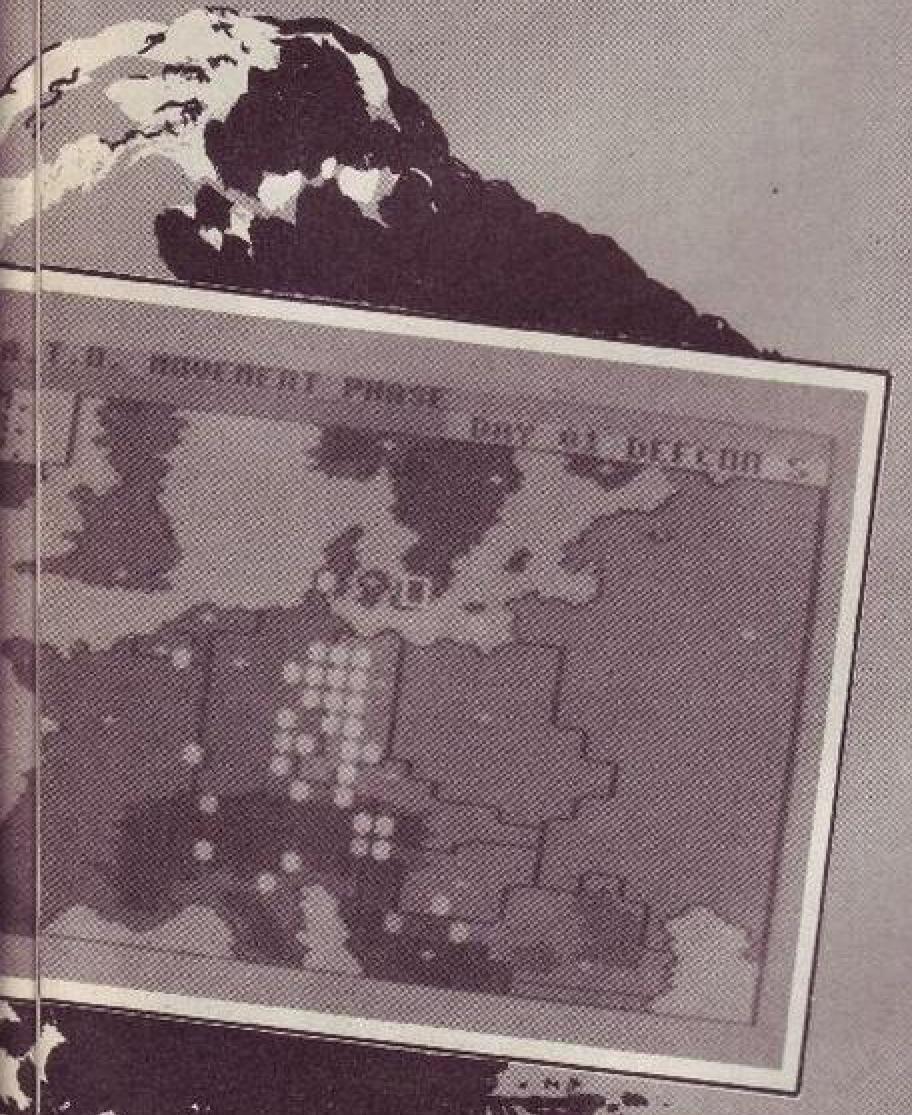
G O O D   N E W S

- ▶ **Some nice graphics like the shark.**
- ▶ **Demanding "panic" gameplay.**

B A D   N E W S

- ▶ **Not much to think about.**
- ▶ **Repetitive gameplay.**
- ▶ **Not enough depth or variety to the game.**

GRAPHICS	59%
SONICS	71%
GRAB FACTOR	48%
STAYING POWER	39%
A A RATING	46%



East meets West in the ultimate conflict in Europe

B A D   N E W S

- ▶ **May be seen by some as tasteless.**

GRAPHICS	72%
SONICS	33%
GRAB FACTOR	89%
STAYING POWER	83%
A A RATING	86%

A word from our sponsors' wives

In one of Geneva's prettiest lakeside villas two middle-aged ladies have got together by the fireside for a nice cup of tea and a good old chinwag.

RITA: ...so I said to him, Nancy, I said: 'If you come back *once* more stinking of vodka then I'm going back to babushka, Mikhail. It's over, kaput, finito –

NANCY: Yes, Rita. I sympathise, but of course Ron never gets into trouble like that. Well, not for a few years he hasn't. Talking of kaput, have you seen the new game from PSS? *Theatre Europe* I think it's called.

RITA: Oh, I don't go to the theatre any more. The Bolshoi isn't what it was, you know.

NANCY: Not *that* kind of theatre. God, you can be stupid sometimes. I mean the war game that gives you the option to launch a total nuclear strike on the Warsaw Pact countries.

RITA: Yes, yes. Mikhail was playing it the other day. Only he was launching the rockets at the NATO countries. These men! I think it's disgusting encouraging people to do such things in games.

NANCY: Oh, Rita, I *totally* disagree. *Theatre Europe* is really an anti-war game. It makes you face up to the consequences of turning Europe into a massive nuclear camp. It forces you to think about the rivalry between the superpowers and what might hap...

RITA: Rubbish! It's just an excuse for boys – and overgrown boys – to feel the thrill of pressing the button for real. They *enjoy* it, you know, when all those cities go up in mushroom clouds.

NANCY: But Ronnie was saying that listening to the telephone call where that poor little baby cries had made him think again about the whole nuclear business. He's even asked Rambo if he should cancel Star Wars.

RITA: Well you can't fool me with your silly arguments. I *know* it's part of a war-mongering plot. And if I catch my Mikhail playing it when he should be visiting the Smolensk Tractor Collective, there'll be fireworks in Red Square, I can tell you.

ACTION TEST

DEATH WAKE

Quicksilva/Argus Press, £7.95 cass, joystick only

A very clever name for a game which you'll soon recognise as taking its inspiration from *Beach-Head*. It's a multi-stage naval engagement in which you control your nation's air and sea defences in a last desperate attempt to destroy the enemy. The task is to blow up a research plant that will otherwise produce atomic weapons to win the war.

The main cog in the nation's defence is "The Undaunted", which is the only weapon capable of destroying the research plant. If you lose this the game will end. The game starts on a map of the battle area, showing airbases, radar, ports and other installations. The action alternates between this and several arcade sequences on the way to the target.

There are three airbases on the map under your control and these can be used to attack the enemy's bases. All bases are boxes with a symbol inside. They turn grey when damaged and black when destroyed by raids from your bases. Enemy attacks can also knock out your bases so their airfields should be hit first to lessen the threat both to bases and the Undaunted. After raids have been exchanged you enter one of the arcade sequences.

The first involves a torpedo plane attack on the Undaunted and her two escorting destroyers. The planes appear in groups of three from the right of the screen and drop torpedoes towards the three ships. They can be swerved to avoid them or you can use the three ship's guns to shoot the planes before they release the torpedoes. The escort ships can afford to be lost, although this reduces firepower, but damage to the Undaunted is the main danger. After several waves you return to the map screen for another exchange of air raids.

The second arcade sequence is a battle against patrol boats which come in from the sides of the screen and then turn towards you before releasing more torpedoes that can again damage the ship. A pair of guns are your defence at the bottom of the screen and can be moved left and right and have their elevation altered. As a last resort you can again swerve to avoid the torpedoes as they slide menacingly towards you through the water.

These early stages are initially very difficult but once the trick to surviving them is found they become mostly routine. After another go at the map screen you have to negotiate a minefield by steering the ships through it. This is difficult with three ships so make sure it's the escorts that get destroyed if anything.

The next stage is a naval engagement with three destroyers. The display is as for the patrol boats but with the three destroyers unmoving and large in your sights. Hitting them is easy with the guns but it has to be done very quickly or the enemy's own salvoes will send the Undaunted to the bottom.

The penultimate stage is pretty much a repeat of the torpedo planes except that they are now bombers swooping in to be avoided or shot down in the same manner. Survive that and up comes the research plant in the middle of a mountainside. Its doors are closing and you have to train the ship's guns on the hole and fire through it before they shut. Succeed and you get a big bonus, fail and you don't. Either way the game ends there.

Some of the graphics are OK and the stages are quite testing but following in the footsteps of *Beach-Head* and the less impressive *Assault on Port Stanley* I don't think it will get many pulses racing.

BW

SECOND OPINION

Not much to say about this one. It's hard to summon up any kind of enthusiasm for a game as merely average as this. The gameplay you've seen before in other programs, the strategy is negligible. Graphics are quite pretty and colourful, but that's about the best I can manage, I'm afraid.

PC

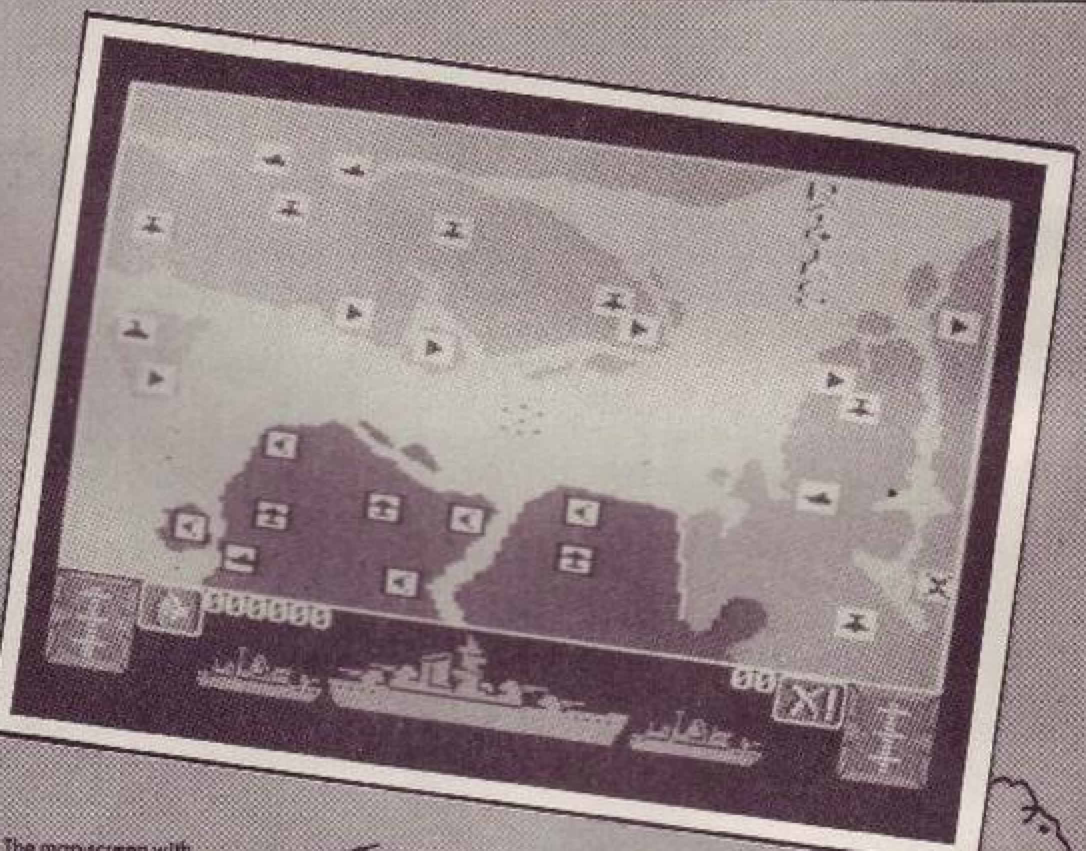
GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Several different types of stage.**
- ▶ **A tough game for the first few plays.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Once cracked there's little to hold your interest.**
- ▶ **The stages are fairly simple in nature.**
- ▶ **The map screen seems to serve little purpose.**

GRAPHICS	57%
SONICS	50%
GRAB FACTOR	63%
STAYING POWER	42%
A A RATING	53%



The map screen with all the bases on

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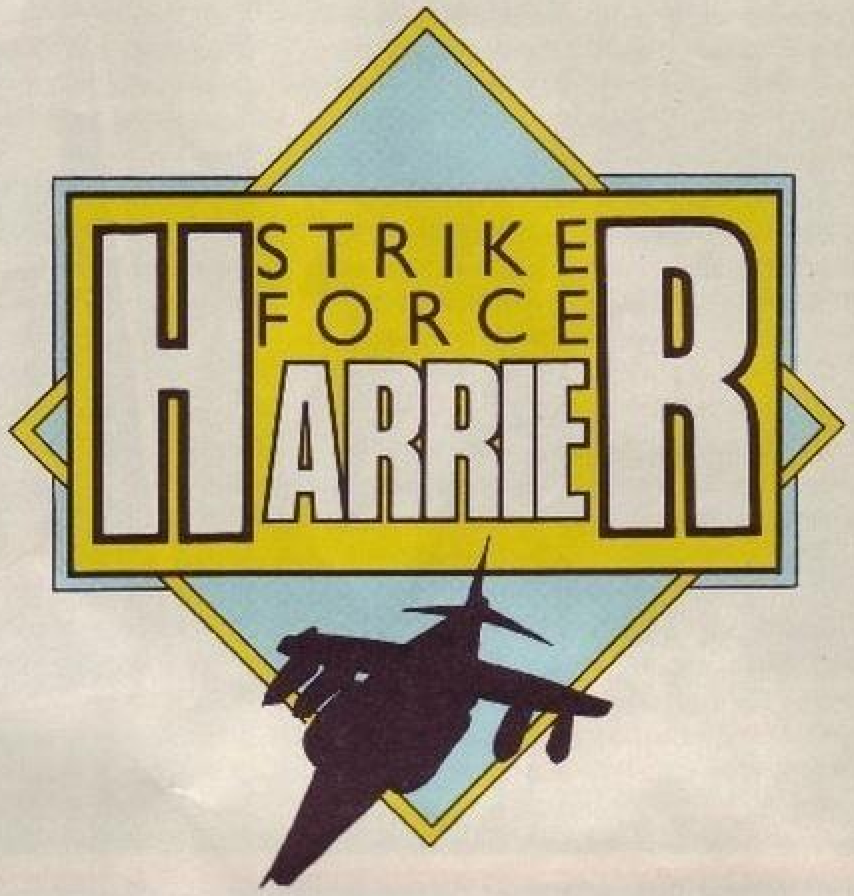

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TORNADO LOW LEVEL

Vortex, £7.95 cass, £13.95 disk, joystick or keys

The game claims to have the "fastest, smoothest scrolling yet to be seen on the Amstrad" and for once an advertising blurb is correct – when this thing moves at high speed it's mind blowing.

You're put at the controls of a Tornado fighter on a mission to blow up five enemy bases. This has to be done from very low level and naturally there are an awful lot of hazards and difficulties that confront you. The action takes place on a multi-screen playing area where everything is represented in 3D. The Tornado begins on the single runway in the game where it is readied for action.

A map of the whole playing area appears and on it pop up the five bases which have to be bombed. Also the fuel and time gauges fill up and ten bombs are placed aboard the plane. Fuel and bombs can be replaced at the runway but the time for the mission must not be exceeded or the game ends. A warning sound is emitted when the plane runs short of fuel or time and this should either send you panicking for the landing strip or hurrying after the last of the bases.

The bases appear as small circles on the ground and to destroy them the plane has to be flown low over the top and a bomb dropped. Excellent control and timing are needed to complete the task which is made harder by the surrounding obstacles.

Just about everything can be crashed into except the runway if you approach it right for the landing. One of the nicest

The lie of the land

There are lots of terrain features to watch out for and all of them to be avoided.

WATER: ripples with waves and makes a lovely splash if you crash into it.

HOUSES: come in various shapes and sizes with windows, roofs, doors, garden walls and of course shadows!

TREES: come in different varieties but there's no skimming through the branches.

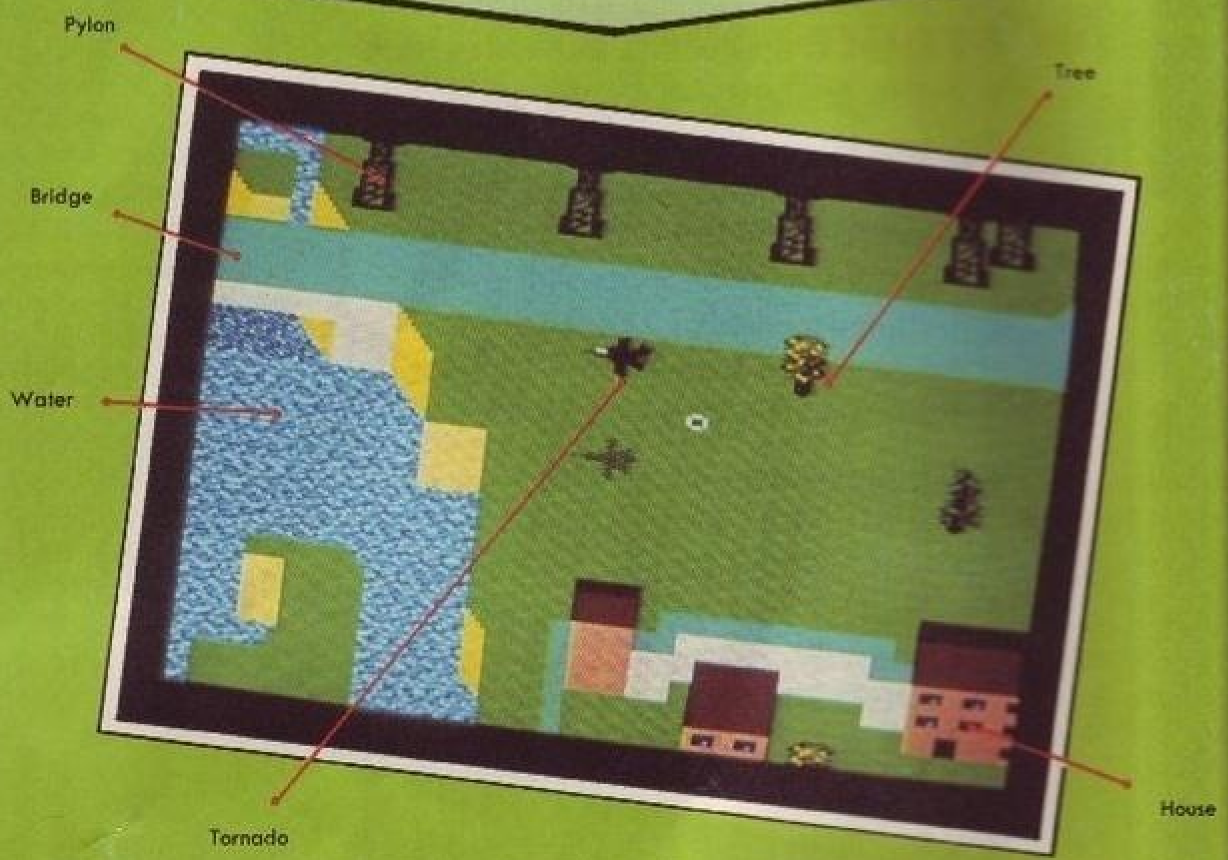
PYLONS: run in long lines and are connected by wires. Can be flown over or under if you've got the nerve and skill.

BRIDGES: a great thrill to fly under these, disappearing momentarily.

TOWERS: there are a couple of these concrete monstrosities and they can bring you down to earth even at maximum altitude.

POLES: the same height as towers and just as dangerous.

CLIFFS: the absent minded sea-skimmer can easily find himself embedded in Dover's whitest.



SWEEVO'S WORLD

Gargoyle Games, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

In a refreshing departure from their complicated, serious arcade adventures Gargoyle have launched upon an unsupecting public a cross between ET, Stan Laurel and C3PO. He's got the weirdest sense of humour of any robot I've ever met and lives in a world populated by little Hitlers, big sprouting fingers and nervous geese.

Each Self-Willed Extreme Environment Vocational Organism (SWEEVO) has to clear up a planet in order to enter human service. Sweevo has been allocated a planet peopled by genetic experiments and the instructions and scenario are peppered with puns and silliness that should raise a smile or two. The game itself also has its funny moments with the cutely animated Sweevo getting into some *very* odd situations.

There are four starting locations for the game and you can select which one Sweevo will parachute into using his trusty umbrella. The first thing you notice is the graphical similarity to the filmation technique used in Ultimate's *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8* games. Each room is shown in a 3D, diagonal view with the stretch-necked Sweevo shuffling about the place in diagonal directions. The rooms are full of wacky objects, mostly fruit, skulls and gravestones, and puzzles which have to be solved. In this respect it differs from the Ultimate games – there are many more types of puzzle, features, humour and transport methods.

To clean up the planet Sweevo has to kill off all its living organisms. These take four forms. *Wijus* are odd beasts with horned heads that have to be wasted, *tyrants* are little Hitlers with moustache and salute who have to be trounced, *minxes* are annoying creatures who have to be mashed and *geese* waddle about waiting to be ghosted. There's a special method for killing each of them but you'll have to find it for yourselves.

SECOND OPINION

The initial reaction of 'Oh no, not another Ultimate-ish 3D game' is very rapidly replaced by astonishment at the brilliance of the graphics and the wit of the gameplay. It really is an enchanting arcade adventure, with some tough and very funny puzzles. Sweevo himself (itself?) is a weird-looking crittur who quickly insinuates himself (itself?) into your affections – it's a sad moment when the grinning Stan Laurelish face turns into a horrible skull. But this is a game which is going to give you a lot more laughs than tears on your way to a solution.

PC

In his quest to kill off all these mutants Sweevo has to watch out for many dangers that can injure or kill him. Bumping into fruit, skulls, gravestones and other features will knock him down, weakening his energy. This is represented by an enlargement of Sweevo's face which gradually turns more unhappy and gaunt until it becomes a skull and he dies. Other objects can be instantly lethal like one ton weights and fingers. The weights are suspended on pillars that dissolve when bumped into and crush anything underneath; fingers are disgusting projections that thrust upwards out of the ground and then disappear, killing you if you happen to have been standing on top of that spot.

There are objects that can be collected from many of the puzzles contained in the game like tins, boots, teddy bears, boos and brownies (?!). What you do with them is another mystery to work out but collecting most of them requires a satisfying mixture of logical thinking and good reactions. Cracking puzzles gives you a real kick and although they aren't as tough or complicated as Gargoyle's previous games they're a lot more fun.

One nice touch is the methods for getting between levels in the game. Sweevo can

The graphic

One of the most endearing things about the game is the delightful graphics that keep occuring. Sweevo himself wanders around looking gormless and cute with his silly, long neck displaying real star quality when he gets boosted to another level or floats down one.

AA RAVE

SECOND OPINION

Stunning scrolling and extremely tough gameplay make this a really absorbing program. The graphics are superb throughout the game, so even if you're crahing repeatedly there's plenty to admire. You probably will crash pretty often – it's no joke trying to control a Tornado when it's shooting along only a few feet above the ground and you're surrounded by pylons, houses and trees. Finding targets is no problem, but actually managing to hit them with bombs is another thing altogether.

I found myself flying around in circles to get the right line while my time and fuel ran out. Features like the sparkling water and the bridges add extra class to a program that would have been a rave without them.

PC

touches is the water which is below the level of the land of course and has cliffs all around it. Perhaps the best moment of the game is flying under a bridge or disappearing behind an outcrop of land to reappear safely on the other side.

Crashes are marked by a wonderful explosion and bases go up with a small flash. The other graphics are excellent and the scrolling at high speed is superb. When the Tornado is at full height the swing wings fold back and it zips across the landscape at supersonic speed – beautiful to watch. When it dips down the speed drops and out come the wings again. The plane banks left and right but this isn't on the spot so space is needed.

At any time the map can be referred to, temporarily pausing the action, to show you the plane's position. If all the targets are destroyed you'll have to make it back to the runway to land and another mission will be given to you even harder than the first. Targets will start to appear in the water and in very tight spots to get at, making destroying them all the more rewarding.

The sound is limited to the roar of the plane's engines and the noise of explosions but music would seem out of place anyway. The playing area isn't massive but within it are plenty of features and difficulties to make life extremely tough. Certainly a game that I could spend hours on end playing and just marvelling at that high speed, smooth scrolling.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Fastest, smoothest scrolling yet on the Amstrad.**
- **Excellent graphics for the whole playing area.**
- **A very tough game task.**
- **Good control of a responsive fighter.**
- **Good reactions, efficiency and daring are needed.**

BAD NEWS

A few other planes to blow out of the sky would have been nice.

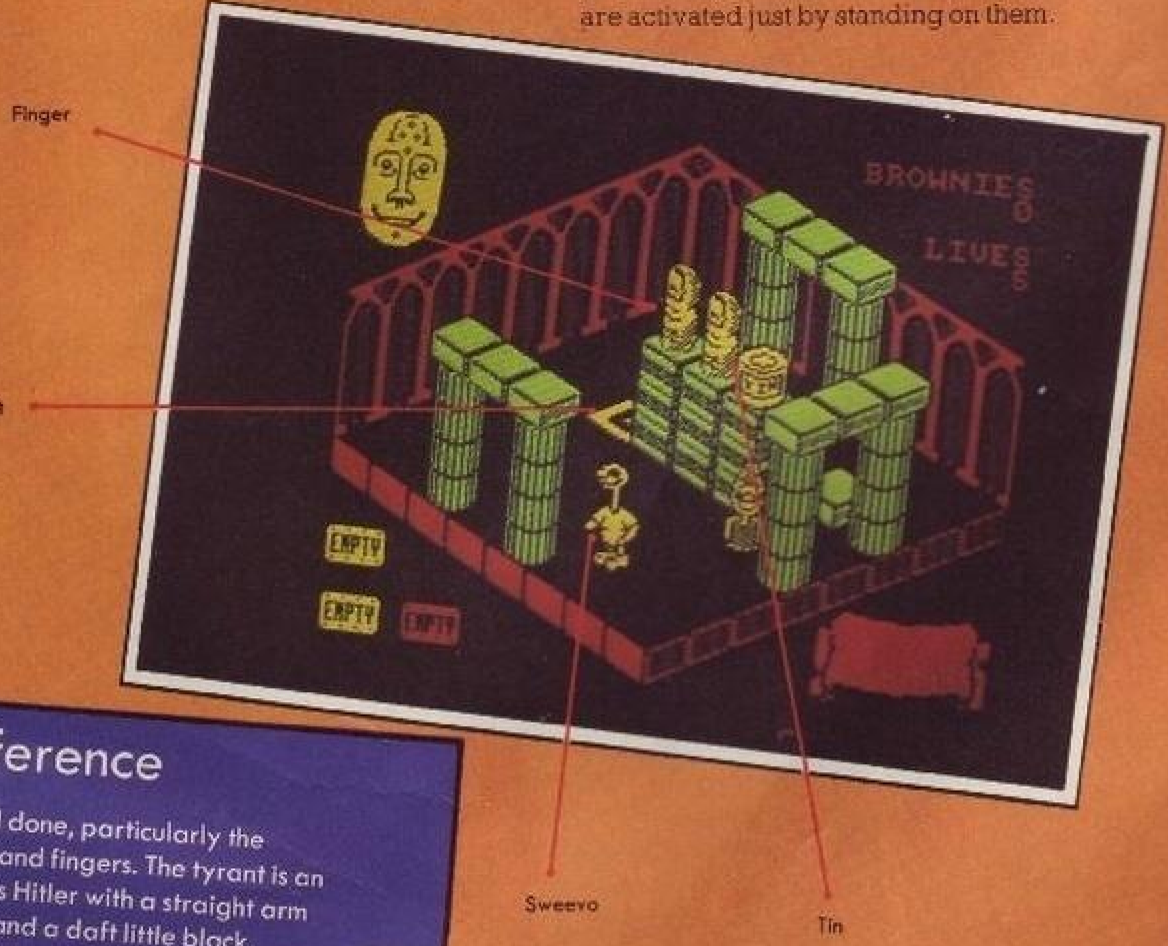
GRAPHICS	97%
SONICS	34%
GRAB FACTOR	93%
STAYING POWER	88%
A A RATING	90%

AA RAVE

stand on explosive pads that bounce him up a level or drop through holes in the floor where he floats down under his umbrella. Lifts also play an important part in many locations and are activated just by standing on them.

The humour and graphics in the game are great with some teasing puzzles to solve and plenty of game to explore. The similarity to previous games doesn't matter at all because there are too many original touches to keep you occupied. A marvellous departure for Gargoyle, showing that they have more than one string to their talented bow.

BW



GOOD NEWS

- **Great 3D graphics.**
- **Good sense of humour in instructions and graphics.**
- **Testing puzzles to work out.**
- **Delightful screen designs and features.**
- **Large, complicated playing area.**

BAD NEWS

- **Some similarities to other games.**

GRAPHICS	96%
SONICS	42%
GRAB FACTOR	90%
STAYING POWER	85%
A A RATING	90%

difference

as well done, particularly the tyrant and fingers. The tyrant is an obvious Hitler with a straight arm salute and a daft little black moustache as he struts about looking imperial. The fingers are truly grotesque but really do look good as they rise up and down

Trading

Without good trading you won't survive for long, so it's best to work out a good strategy. Illegal goods like narcotics and slaves bring high profits but high risks as well, as the pirates and police will be after you.

Planets fall into several categories including agricultural and industrial with different tecnology levels and economies that affect the pricing of goods. For instance, a good profit should be made by buying computers at a high tech industrial planet and selling them at a low tech agricultural one.

ELITE

Firebird/Torus, £14.95 cass, joystick with keys or keys

MASTERGAME

The most talked about game of 1985 has arrived and is still living up to its name by joining the elite ranks of games on the Amstrad. The game is a classic combination of trading and space shoot-em-up action set in a massive universe of 2,000 planets and eight galaxies. It captures the attention of nearly every one who plays it by plunging them into a world so real and absorbing that you could play it forever.

The impressive packaging is the first thing that captures the eye and imagination, presenting masses of background information, humour and atmospheric detail. The instruction booklet introduces you to the world in which you are about to be immersed and a story, *The Dark Wheel*, sets the scene and builds up the atmosphere for the task ahead. All the controls and tasks will take a while to learn but the instructions are well written and, despite their length, should guide you into the game quite easily.

SECOND OPINION

Two or three years ago the computer games scene was flooded with tawdry little space trading games, in which you flitted around a pathetically small universe in search of goods and a little bit of fun. Sometimes you got the goods, but you hardly ever found any fun.

Elite *has taken that very basic formula and turned it into a superbly executed and totally involving game. The idea is essentially the same, but with just about every addition you could want. Add to this the truly superb graphics, a witty scenario and some complex strategy and you have a megagame.*

It's not easy to play, and I'm still languishing as 'harmless' at the bottom of the rankings – so what's new? – but I know that with time and hard work I can become a contender. I will be ELITE.

PC

You begin the ultimate in space adventure at a planet called Lave at the bottom left hand corner of galaxy one. From this starting point with an ill-equipped Cobra Mk III ship and only 100 credits in your pocket you have to take on the universe at trading and in battle. You'll need fuel to start your travels and after this you can launch the Cobra and practice some flying.

After blasting down the launching tunnel the ship emerges to the sight of a coloured planet and space dust whizzing by. Now is your chance to get familiar with the ship's instrumentation and control, and practice docking with the space station which you just left. The flying controls and scanner may seem complicated at first but a little practice in the safety of the station area will ease a pilot into the rigours of life among the elite.

Now you should study all the scanners and information at your disposal on the various menus. In flight you can view space from forward, rear, left and right angles with space dust and all other objects visible in the relevant view. Information is also contained on the instrument panel of shield status, cabin and laser temperatures, altitude, missiles, speed, radar, attitude and power. The radar scan is the most complicated of these to understand as it presents a three dimensional view of the surrounding space but, again, practice will enable you to track objects quite succesfully.

Space dust – scattered like glittering stars – is the only constant feature in the view but there are many other colourful objects that can appear. Planets and suns come in several different colours and this really brings a whole new look to the display. Not only do the planets vary in colour but so do the other ships and space stations from system to system. The ships are still line drawn and the planets do not obscure space dust, but colour really does brighten up the view.

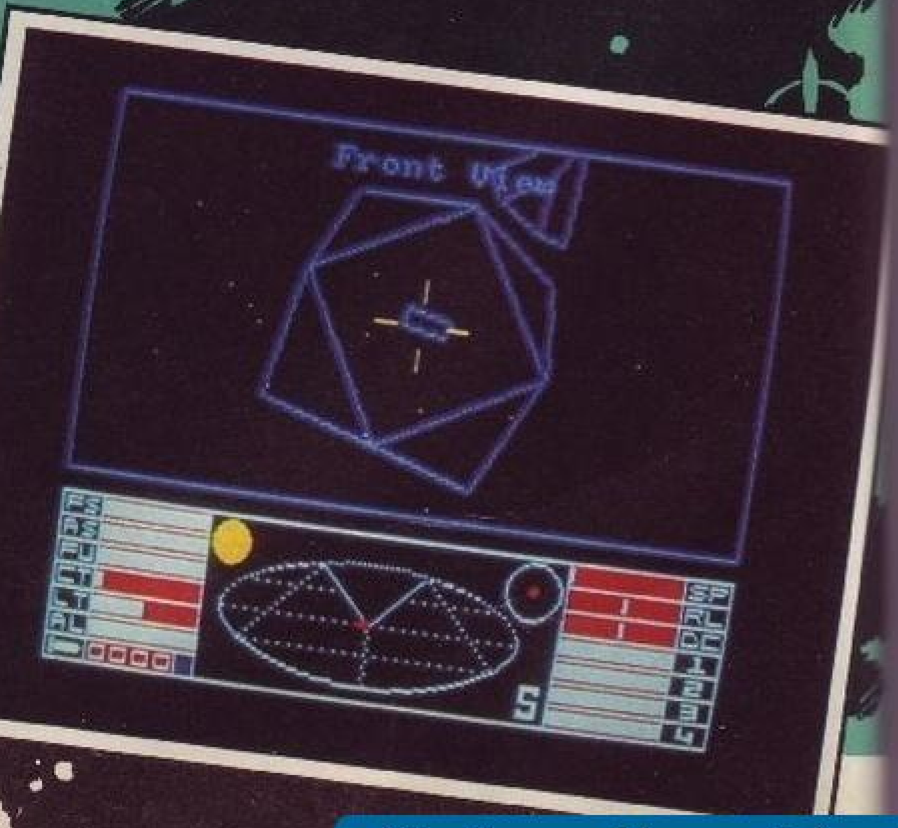
The ships in the game are all named after snakes and have a distinctive appearance, from the deadly lines of the police's Vipers to the sinister Fer-de-Lance's of the bounty hunters and the evil Kraits, much loved by pirates. Some ships will be peaceful traders and won't attack but others will go after you for the cargo and the police will swarm over lawbreakers. Most dangerous of all are the Thargoids, an insectoid race who spell instant death for most flyers and can attack in even greater numbers than the police Vipers.

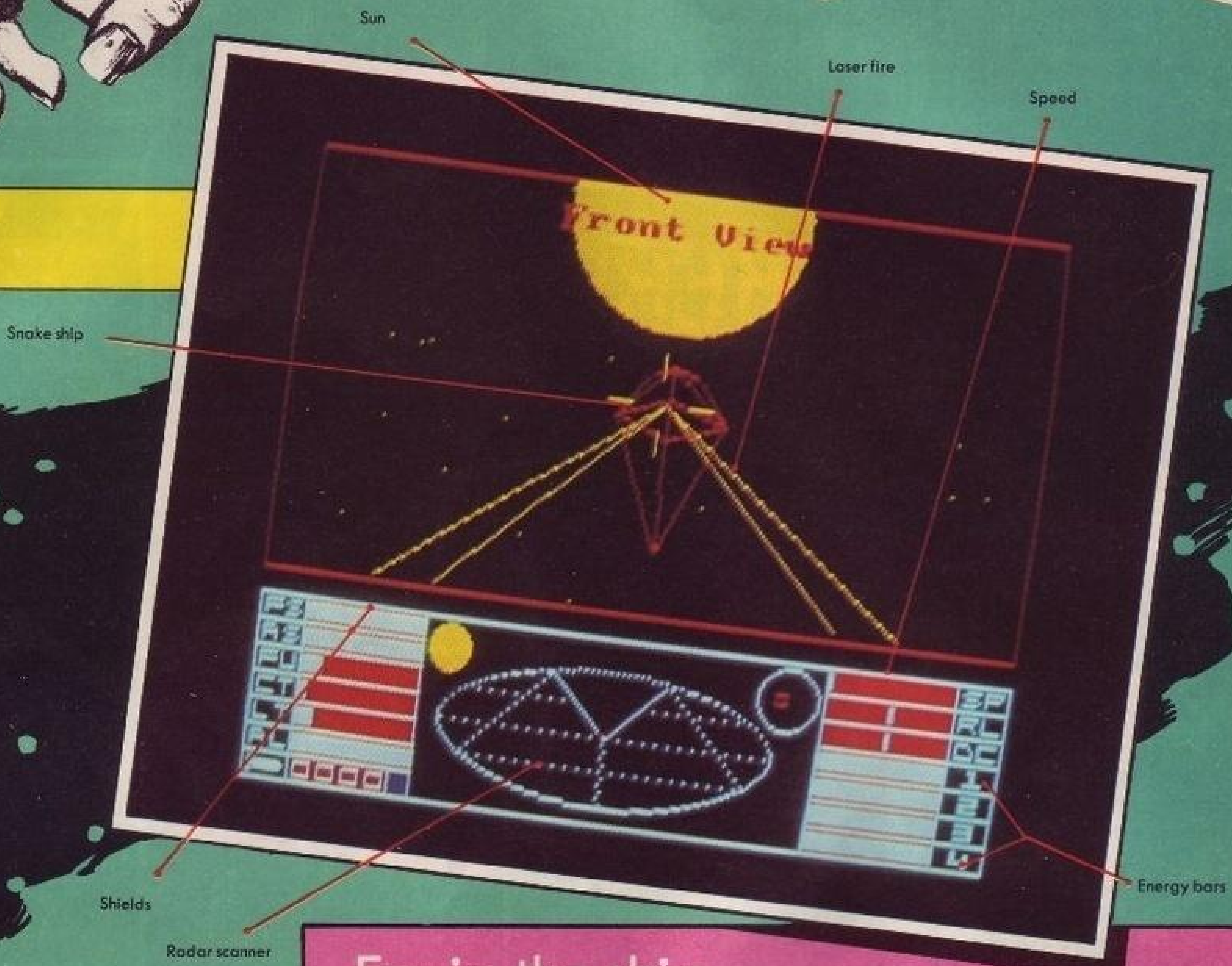
The combat element is vital to success but without good trading it counts for little. Trading is how money is made and equipment bought, for which you need a good knowledge of the economic and social structure of the universe. Some planets are particularly good for buying and selling goods at while some hold many dangers for the unwary pilot. For instance computers will fetch a high price on a poor agricultural world, but it may also be an anarchist or feudal planet and therefore swarming with pirates.

As your wealth increases new pieces of equipment can be bought to make your task easier and quicker. The aim is of course to become ELITE. You begin as HARMLESS and through surviving battles and destroying ships the rating can be increased. But beware – achieving elite status is very tough.

Within the major quest are many subsidiary steps such as gaining an expensive piece of equipment, exploring a new galaxy or completing one of the four special missions. These missions will crop up when your rating suggests you are ready to handle them but their secret nature means that you'll have to wait to find out what they are.

During any stage of the game a number of menus can be accessed





giving information on the ship's position and trading status. These are the galactic chart, short range chart, market prices and overall status information. Other menus can only be accessed when docked – these are the buying and selling of goods, and buying of equipment.

The vector graphics are excellent, smooth moving and the variety of colours makes the display superb. Many nice touches have been included such as the tunnels when entering or leaving a space station and hyperspace, and the blurring of the stars as the ship "jumps" towards a planet or sun. Most of the sound effects are disappointing but the wimpy laser sound is more than made up for by the colourful explosion of an enemy ship when you get enough hits on it. The gameplay is wonderfully addictive and really does succeed in taking you into a new world of challenge and danger.

BW

Equip the ship

There are plenty of add-ons for your vessel, but they all cost money – some of them a small fortune.

FUEL: needed for every trip.
MISSILES: the ship can carry four, which home in on enemy ships.
LARGE CARGO BAY: enlarge cargo capacity from 20 to 35 tons.
ECM SYSTEM: defends against missiles.
PULSE LASERS: weakest laser system.
BEAM LASERS: middle strength laser system.
MILITARY LASERS: strongest lasers – very deadly (and expensive).
MINING LASERS: used to extract cargo from asteroids.
FUEL SCOOPS: collect cargo in space and scoop fuel from suns.
ENERGY BOMB: destroys all ships within scanner range of ship.
ENERGY UNIT: replenishes energy and shields faster.
ESCAPE POD: used in emergencies to escape a doomed ship.
DOCKING COMPUTER: docks automatically at space stations.
GALACTIC HYPERSPACE: used to get between the eight galaxies.

GOOD NEWS

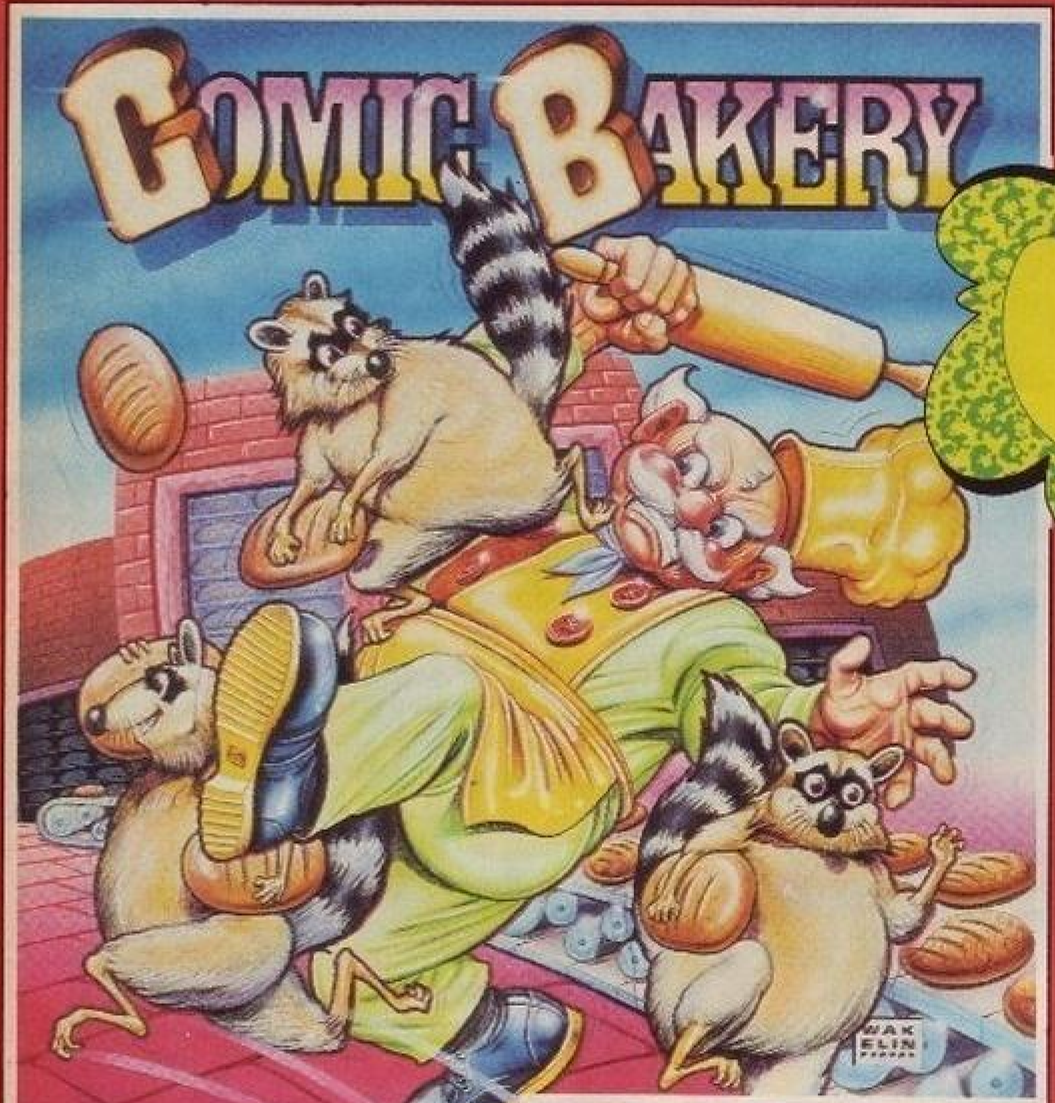
- **Lots more colour than previous versions of the game.**
- **Smooth vector graphics.**
- **Great combination of trading and shoot-em-up.**
- **Tremendous lasting challenge to get equipment and explore universe.**
- **Excellent packaging and atmosphere.**
- **Four special missions.**

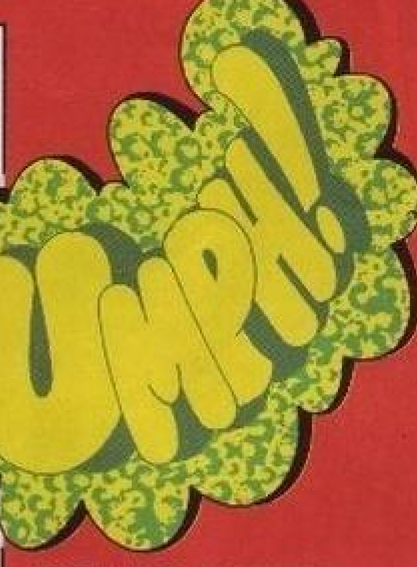
BAD NEWS

- **It is rather expensive.**

GRAPHICS	96%
SONICS	24%
GRAB FACTOR	94%
STAYING POWER	95%
A A RATING	94%

The Cracking Christmas Collec





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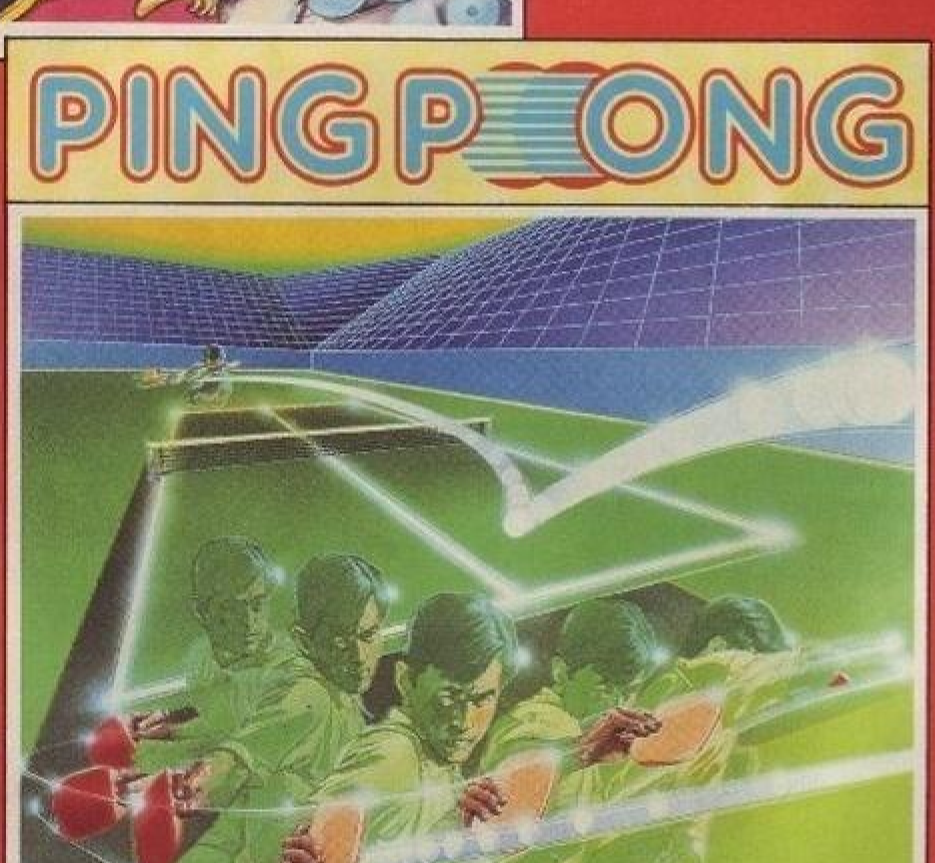

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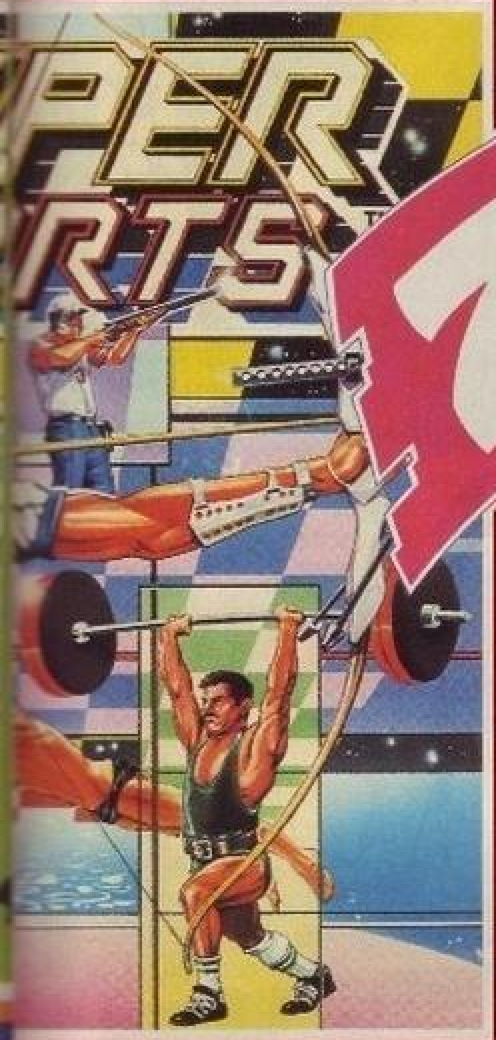

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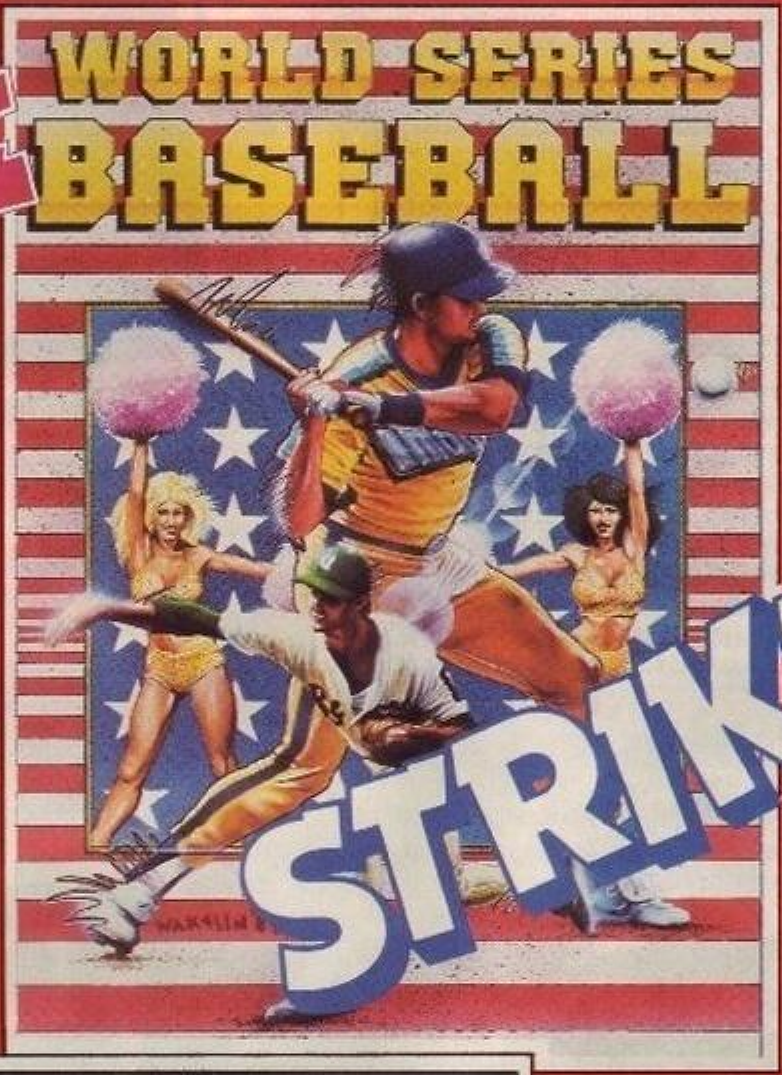

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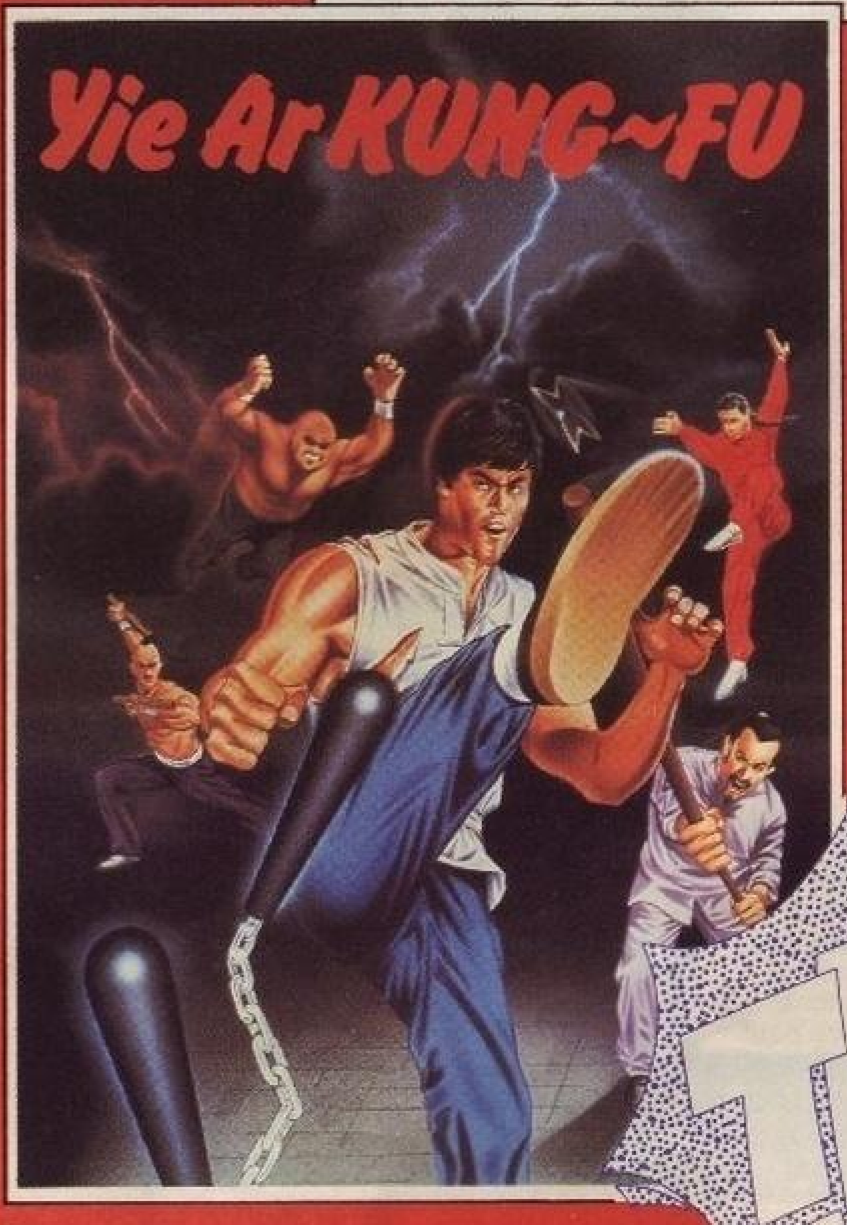

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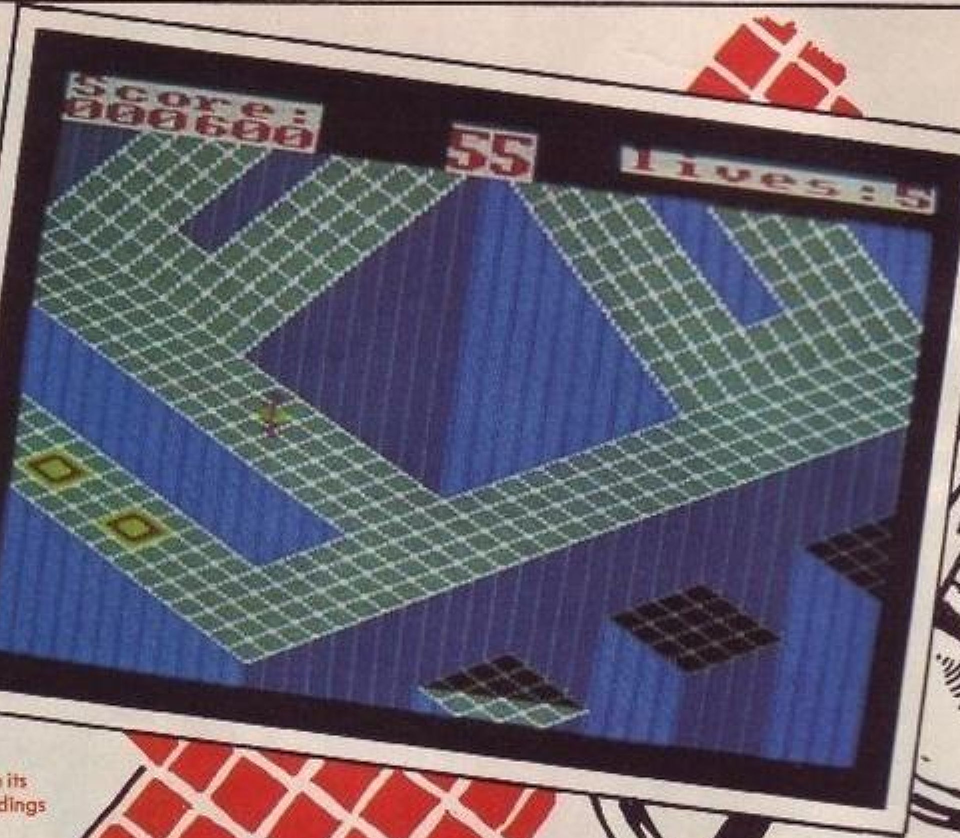
GYROSCOPE

Melbourne House, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

As far as home computers are concerned this is a stunningly original game, featuring a tough to control gyroscope on its perilous journey through 28 devilish screens. It's based on an arcade game called *Marble Madness* but like all such imitations doesn't quite match up to the original.

The game takes place against a futuristic and abstract group of 28 screens which have to be negotiated by a gyroscope. The gyro spins on an axis and purely with joystick or key action can be moved in all directions. It spins upon a smooth surface divided up into squares, giving the whole scene a geometric look. The landscape is contoured by slopes, towers, shadows, canyons and ledges that give each screen a very attractive design.

The task facing your spinning scope is to get to the bottom of the 28 screen course which is composed of seven sections, four screens in each. The sections have to be completed within a 60 second time limit by reaching a large green square on the fourth screen. Points are scored for each new



The gyroscope in its futuristic surroundings

BARRY McGUIGAN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING

Activision/Gamestar, £9.99 cass, joystick or keys

Hot on the heels of his World Championship triumphs last year, BM has made his computer debut in just the same dynamic and powerful style that typifies his boxing. Despite being the fourth boxing game on the market in recent months it more tham matches the others and will provide long hours of fisticuff entertainment.

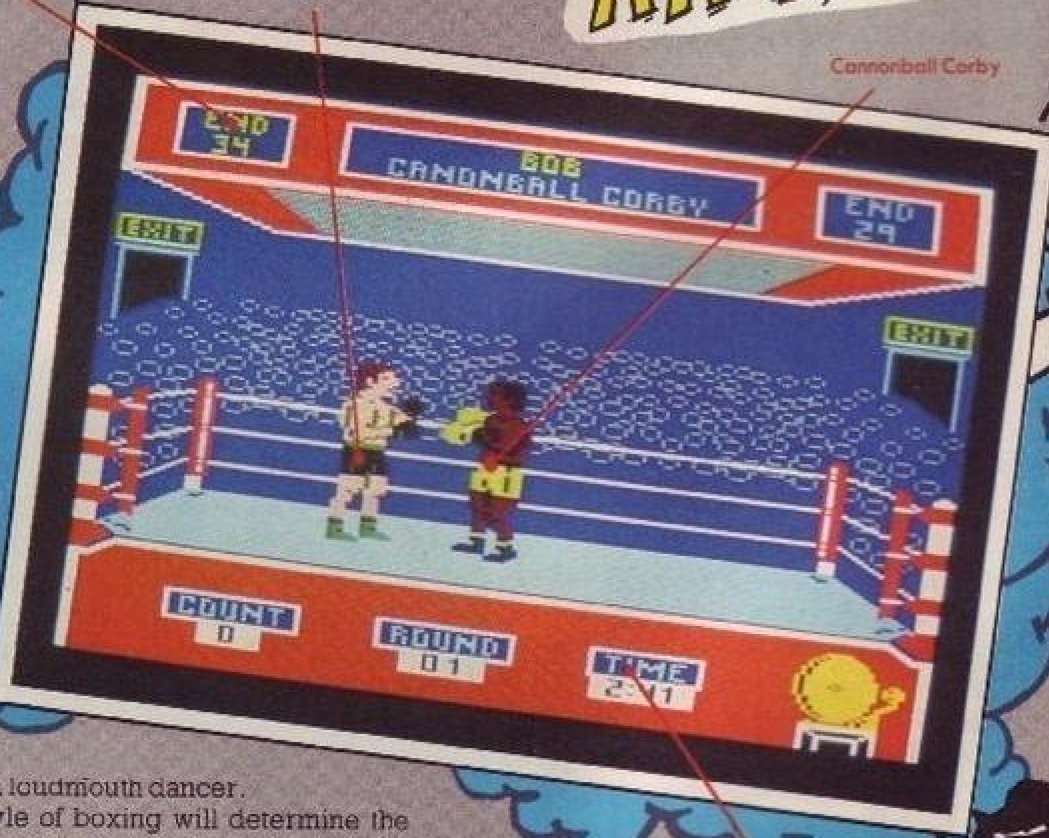
The contest can take the form of two-player battles or of one player battling against the 19 computer opponents as he tries to beat Barry for his world title. The first action of the prospective world champion is to create his own boxer from various characteristics in true Frankenstein style. He can be black or white and have various shades of hair colour and shorts – judge for yourself whether they make any difference to your performance. Most important is the boxing style you choose and your personality, which can be one of several types from a nice guy slugger to a loudmouth dancer.

The style of boxing will determine the best punches and tactics for use in a fight while the personality will affect the attitude of the boxer. This is all revealed in the boxer's profile which gives information on his strength, stamina, endurance, agility, best

The endurance ratings

Boxer Bob

Cannonball Corby



Plenty of time left in round one

SECOND OPINION

We always knew Barry M could box a bit, but his programming skills come as a revelation – this is the best punch-em-up yet on the Amstrad, a really exciting blend of fistic fury and calm strategy. The thrill of winning my first fight against Cannonball Corby roused the whole office from their cider-induced torpor. I was chaired round the streets of Somerton, the brass band played etc. etc.

What makes the game is the fact that from the very beginning you know that skill rather than luck is the determining factor. If you train properly, go to bed early, live a clean life and throw the right punches you'll do well.

PC

Style and temperament guide

Here's a list of the different boxing styles you can have.

DANCER: moves around a lot and rarely goes in close to punch.

BOXER: likes to keep his distance and punch in flurries.

MIXED: an unpredictable style that makes you hard for your opponents to read.

SLUGGER: likes to get in close and batter away. Doesn't tire easily.

BULLDOG: likes to trade blows toe to toe and can trap feebler men on the ropes.

The personality traits that will determine the boxer's attitude are: nice guy, erratic, hot temper, loudmouth and bruiser.

SECOND OPINION

On my first go I thought the control in this game was going to be so awkward that I'd just leave it alone. But I found myself having another go, and then another and then... It really is very addictive. It's also very tough and will demand a lot of anyone who plays it, even if they are joystick maestros. A very smooth and impressive game.

PC

screen visited and as a bonus for the time left at the end of a stage.

The trouble with gyroscopes is that they have the annoying habit of running into, or off, things and falling over. You are only allowed seven lives and one of these is lost every time you fall over or run out of time but another is added for every thousand points scored.

Many obstacles stand in your way and each one presents a particular problem. Narrow ledges call for very tight control, which is far from easy with a machine that suffers from inertia. Many sections have to be steered round very slowly and one wrong twitch on the joystick may send you crashing off the course. Control in these situations is initially extremely difficult but as you get used to it it becomes a finely balanced challenge to test your joystick skills. Keyboard players may find things harder but it will certainly sharpen up the reactions.

Control becomes even harder on some patches of ground that are made up of slippery glass, steep slopes and magnets. Glass disables your controls as the gyro skids across it, possibly to its doom. Steep slopes accelerate you down them and sometimes at angles and can also throw the gyro to an early grave. Magnets are really nasty and can disorientate the controls and bounce you about all over the place. Some screens even have large areas of open space with an odd buoyancy effect on the gyro.

The most difficult hazard are the aliens that inhabit some screens. They move around in general zones but within that area their actions are random so that getting past them can be a real pain in the gyro. They seem to hit you unfairly sometimes when you get close to them and it can be enormously frustrating after mastering the technique of control only to find an infuriatingly random hazard.

As you move from one screen to the next the display scrolls jerkily to reveal the new area and although the screens look good there isn't much animation. The musical accompaniment is full of variations on a theme but unfortunately this goes off-key in places. The most annoying feature is the "dissolving" title screen as you start a game. It takes several seconds and serves no obvious use.

Plenty of marks for originality and gameplay and as ever it's a very slick package from Melbourne House. The minor niggles can become very annoying in this sort of frustration game but I was left wanting even more and varied screens. A great game that could be just that bit better.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Attractive and well designed screens.**
- ▶ **Great control once you've got the hang of it.**
- ▶ **Very original gameplay.**
- ▶ **A very tough frustration game.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Little animation, bad scrolling and imprecise alien collision spoil the graphics.**
- ▶ **May be too frustrating if you don't like the control.**

GRAPHICS	70%
SONICS	71%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	73%
A A RATING	78%

punch, recovery, fight record and winnings. Having examined this you can now head your man towards his first fight.

The boxer can begin as a new pro or a contender, which will determine whether he starts at 20th or 10th in the world rankings. He can decide to take on one of the two boxers ahead of him in the rankings or the one behind him. Each fight will have details of the purse, a number of weeks to train for it and the number of rounds. Having selected the opponent his profile can be examined – it gives the same information as yours and hopefully reveals his weaknesses.

The strategy element continues with the weeks in training camp where five different training routinues – heavy bag, light bag, sparring, roadwork and weights – can be allocated to build up areas of your fighting ability. The strategy side to the game is quite absorbing and vital as well because one wrong decision may leave you with little chance in the fight.

The fights take place over 10 or 12 rounds of three minutes (slightly faster than real time) each. The ring is shown in 2D with the boxers moving left and right but despite this there are several dimensions to the fighting. The first is that the boxers move automatically depending on their boxing style, leaving you to concentrate on the punching. There are eight different moves that work at two distances.

When the boxers are close together the inside punches, such as uppercut and hook, need to be used. Further apart outside moves are needed like the jab. Crosses and bodyshots can be used at both distances. Each punch requires different amounts of energy and has different effects on your opponent.

Each fight requires a long term plan to either KO your opponent with some big punching, wear him down and then stop him with a series of knockdowns or try to outpoint him. The last of these is extremely difficult and will require a lot of skill. When a flurry of punches occurs the crowd's excitement will increase while a knockdown will provoke wild cheering and flashing of camera bulbs.

At the end of each round a break is taken to show the points situation and stamina, strength and endurance ratings. If you win a fight you move up in the rankings and the boxer's skills may increase along with his earnings.

There's an excellent blend of strategy, tactics and arcade action to provide a great boxing simulation that probably gets as close to the real thing as possible. The long term challenge of moving up the rankings is a tough one that keeps you at it and with so much variety possible you shouldn't tire easily. I hate to say it but – a real knockout!

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **19 different, but tough, fighters to battle.**
- ▶ **Great variety in boxers you can create.**
- ▶ **Good strategy element in the plan of action.**
- ▶ **Ring action demands plenty of skill.**
- ▶ **Excellent graphical and sound touches like KOs and crowd roar.**
- ▶ **True two-player action**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Not for pacifists.**

GRAPHICS	77%
SONICS	75%
GRAB FACTOR	87%
STAYING POWER	86%
A A RATING	86%

LIFE EXPECTANCY ZERO

Blaby Computer Games, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

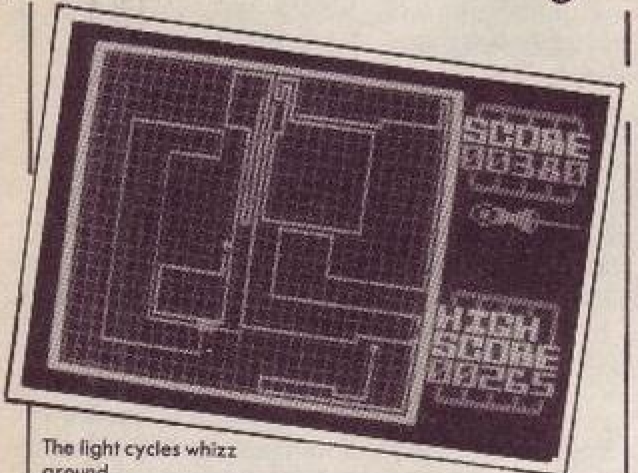
Older readers may remember a game from the dawn of computer time which was generally known as *Light Cycles*. You controlled a coloured blob moving around a grid on screen. The computer controlled another blob. The object was to whizz around occupying as much territory as possible for as long as possible, all the while avoiding running into the lines you had laid down or the edges of the screen.

That's what you get in this offering from Blaby. You start against only one computer opponent and work your way through to as many as five. It won't take you long because the computer is really pretty dim and doesn't need much encouragement to tie itself up in knots and commit suicide.

This is a very simple game which will not appeal to the demanding gamester for very long. Graphics are rudimentary, but the the sound does use the DK Tronics synthesiser.

PC

ACTION TEST



The light cycles whizz around

SECOND OPINION

I was initially pleased to see this version of the old games of Surround *and* Gridcycles *(from* Tron*) but after cracking it on the first game this nostalgia didn't last long. Seldom have I encountered a computer opponent so inept, it was like playing against the Keystone Kops in a demolition derby. The scrolling title screen is nice but the gameplay would put an insomniac to sleep.*

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **May stoke the fires of nostalgia.**

BAD NEWS

- **Slow.**
- **Far too easy.**
- **No staying power.**

GRAPHICS	29%
SONICS	35%
GRAB FACTOR	25%
STAYING POWER	15%
A A RATING	23%

TIM LOVE'S CRICKET

Peaksoft, £8.95 cass, £9.95 disk (disk is mail order only), joystick with keys

As England prepare for their mammoth task in the Test series against the West Indies, you can sit back in a comfy chair and while away a few lazy hours playing cricket on Arnold. Rain won't stop play and the only bad light you'll have to worry about is if there's a power cut.

The game is a combination of joystick and keyboard action with a hefty dose of tactics and cricketing strategy. Either one day games or full blown test matches can be played and whether you play the computer or a friend there will always be a result, never a draw.

The first step is to decide which teams you want to play. An England team and a World XI are initially provided but if you don't fancy the programmer's selection these are easily changed. Each of the 11 players on the two sides has three types of information on them: a description of the type of player (batsman, wicketkeeper, fast, medium or spin bowler), a bowling rating and a batting rating. These descriptions can be altered before the match to produce the composition of players you like.

The bowling and batting ratings have to be allocated out of a maximum of 30 and 50 points respectively, but nine is the highest that one player can be rated. When allocating bowling points you need to remember that six bowlers will be needed for a one day game but less for a test match. Having decided the type of game and opponent there are three skill levels to select from: village green, county and test match. The difference between them is the speed at which action sections of the game move.

The bowling side has to use the cursor keys to control the players' actions while the batsmen uses joystick. Having selected a bowler (remember not to tire one individual out) you can control the speed of approach, angle of delivery, pitch of the ball and the swing or spin. This is done during a 3D animated sequence in which the bowler runs up the screen which then scrolls to reveal the batsman as the ball is delivered. The run up is nicely animated except for the bowlers feet which, are reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin's.

The batsman has control over both the batsman's body and bat. As the ball approaches he has to quickly get into position and angle the bat to hit the ball. He can be out in most of the usual ways like l.b.w., clean bowled or hit wicket. If he makes contact or the ball whizzes by the wicket the view changes to that of the whole ground dotted with stickmen players. These can be positioned at the start of the over to try to prevent runs.

SECOND OPINION

If you're not a fan of the real thing, beware of this program. It takes almost as much time to play as a test match and demands a lot of attention from the player. If you're prepared to give it, the game will reward you.

The computer opponent, though, can be tiresomely good, catching everything in sight, whacking each ball for boundaries and dismissing you for a pathetic total. It will then score in the region of 1,000 very quickly. Play a humanoid – it's more fun.

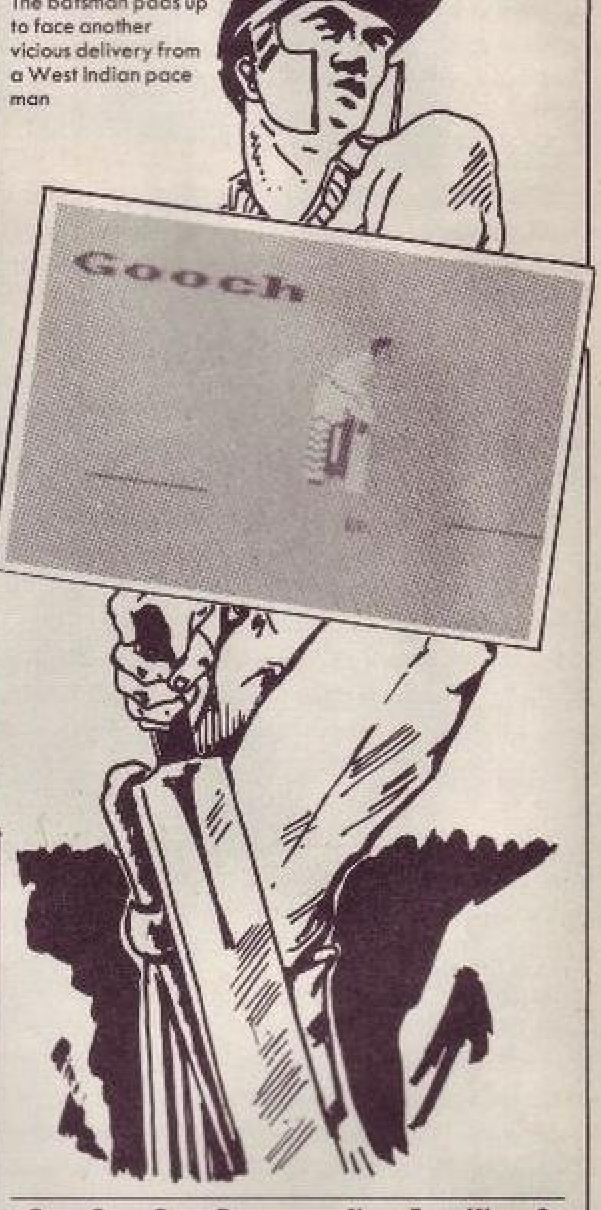
PC

At this stage the batsmen can run but are still at risk from catches and run outs. Fielders chase the ball and can be made to dive to stop it. Controlling them can be tiresome as you have to keep switching players and when they do dive they look like they've just fallen out of a pub. The ball is automatically thrown back, when a fielder reaches it, in a long, curving arc to the wicketkeepers end.

The action continues like this with runs totting up, wickets going down and statistics being compiled until the teams are out or the 60 overs is up for a limited overs game. Against the computer you won't last long against a decent team but a friend can provide much more unpredictability and excitement. The graphics are unsophisticated but serve their purpose, as do the noises of leather on willow, well...wet kipper on blancmange then, and footsteps. Certainly one for the fan, but with a potentially wider appeal.

BW

The batsman pads up to face another vicious delivery from a West Indian pace man



GOOD NEWS

- **Best cricket game yet on Amstrad.**
- **One day and test match games.**
- **Plenty of variety in options and skills required.**
- **A really tough computer opponent or two player excitement.**

BAD NEWS

- **Cricket's a funny game and may not appeal to all.**
- **Very little sound.**
- **No lunch or tea intervals.**

GRAPHICS	57%
SONICS	17%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	69%
A A RATING	67%

pride utilities

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THE HUSTLER

Bubble Bus, £2.99 cass, joystick or keys

This is a game which has been around a long time on other computers, its rather late appearance on the Arnold giving it a budget-ish price. As a game it will hold few surprses for anyone, unless they've managed to miss the interminable hours of snooker on the telly recently.

Of course, this isn't snooker, but pool. As such there are fewer balls on the table, which can only be an advantage if your aim isn't quite as true as Minnesota Fats'.

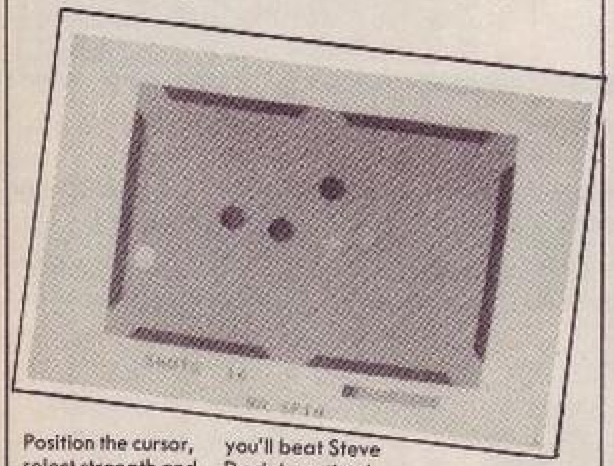
There are, in fact, only six balls to pot. But there is a choice of three different ways of doing this for one player against the computer or for two players. You can just go for putting all the balls down – any order, any pocket. Or you can pocket the balls in order, from 1 to 6. Most difficult is to pocket each ball in its own particular pocket – this could keep you whacking around the baize for a good few hours.

SECOND OPINION

The ageing nature of the game is reflected in the price and consequently probably presents better value than any of the other snooker and pool games on the market. The ball movement is admirably fast and smooth although it's going to take some practice to get used to the angles. The screen colours are rather off-putting and could have been done in darker shades for more impact. Worth a look if you don't already have a pool game.

BW

Control is achieved by positioning the cursor where you want the cue ball to strike. Strength is controlled by pressing the fire button or space bar when a rising and falling gauge is at its peak. More delicate features allow you to impart spin to the ball. So, if you are in a straight line with a ball hanging on the lip of the pocket, you would select B for back spin and hit the ball with maximum power – you would then 'screw back' and prevent the cue ball following the object ball ignominiously into the pocket. Other spin options include top and side.



Position the cursor, select strength and spin, pot away – and you'll beat Steve Davis in no time!

Hustler's display is straightforward and clear. As you would expect, the baize surface is green – though it does look a little bit faded. Cushions and balls are red. Movement is smooth and realistic, despite the slightly small dimensions of the playing area. Sound is unexceptional, but the theme tune pinched from TV's *Pot Black* is jaunty enough.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **1 or 2 player options.**
- ▶ **Choice of spin.**
- ▶ **Smooth, clear graphics.**
- ▶ **Reasonable price.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Hard to be completely accurate.**
- ▶ **Won't prepare you for the real thing.**

GRAPHICS	66%
SONICS	52%
GRAB FACTOR	53%
STAYING POWER	62%
A A RATING	59%

REMOTE EXCAVATION MODULE

Blaby Computer Games, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

I suppose it was inevitable that a copy of that great game *Boulderdash* would appear, but even though this one is a lot cheaper I don't think it will give much competition to the original. It's set in underground vaults where a remote excavation module (REM) has to collect radioactives before moving onto the next of 20 screens.

The playing area is a very large cavern that has been filled with volcanic rocks, earth, radioactives and aliens. On each of the 20 areas there are a number of radioactives lying around to be collected (or created if there are none). Once the correct number has been picked up you can move onto the next level with a new layout and new difficulties.

As the REM moves about the screen you notice this game's one big failing – the scrolling. It is absolutely awful and guaranteed to bring out the worst in migraine sufferers. The control is also bad since it is difficult to calculate when to change direction when being chased or about to be squashed. If you can cope with these problems the game presents a challenge but I suspect most people would rather have the real thing.

Once inside a cave the physics of the game are much like *Boulderdash*, with gravity affecting both rocks and radioactives, creating the danger of you being squashed. If you do collect enough radioactives within the generous fuel time limit you can exit to the next screen or continue collecting for more bonus. A bonus is also given for fuel left and once you've completed the level you're given a code allowing you to bypass it next time.

Every fifth cavern is a challenge stage where bonus points can be earned but lives can't be lost. If you get far enough you start to encounter the three forms of alien life that have invaded the caves. Glomps are first and these smiling, red-faced chaps home in on you, killing you on contact.
Spidons are similar but when crushed by a rock turn into a radioactive. Blinkers don't kill you but sap the fuel supply when they touch the REM.

The whole thing is played at a much

SECOND OPINION

It's certainly the scrolling that's the problem with this. If it were about 200% smoother the game would be a reasonable budget alternative to the real thing. As it is, it can only be recommended to masochists and rock fetishists.

PC

CAVES OF DOOM

Mastertronic, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

Mastertronic keep up their amazing performance on the Amstrad with yet another budget release that is worth every penny of £1.99. It's another arcade adventure with new tactics and features including a screen design function allowing you to change the whole nature of the game.

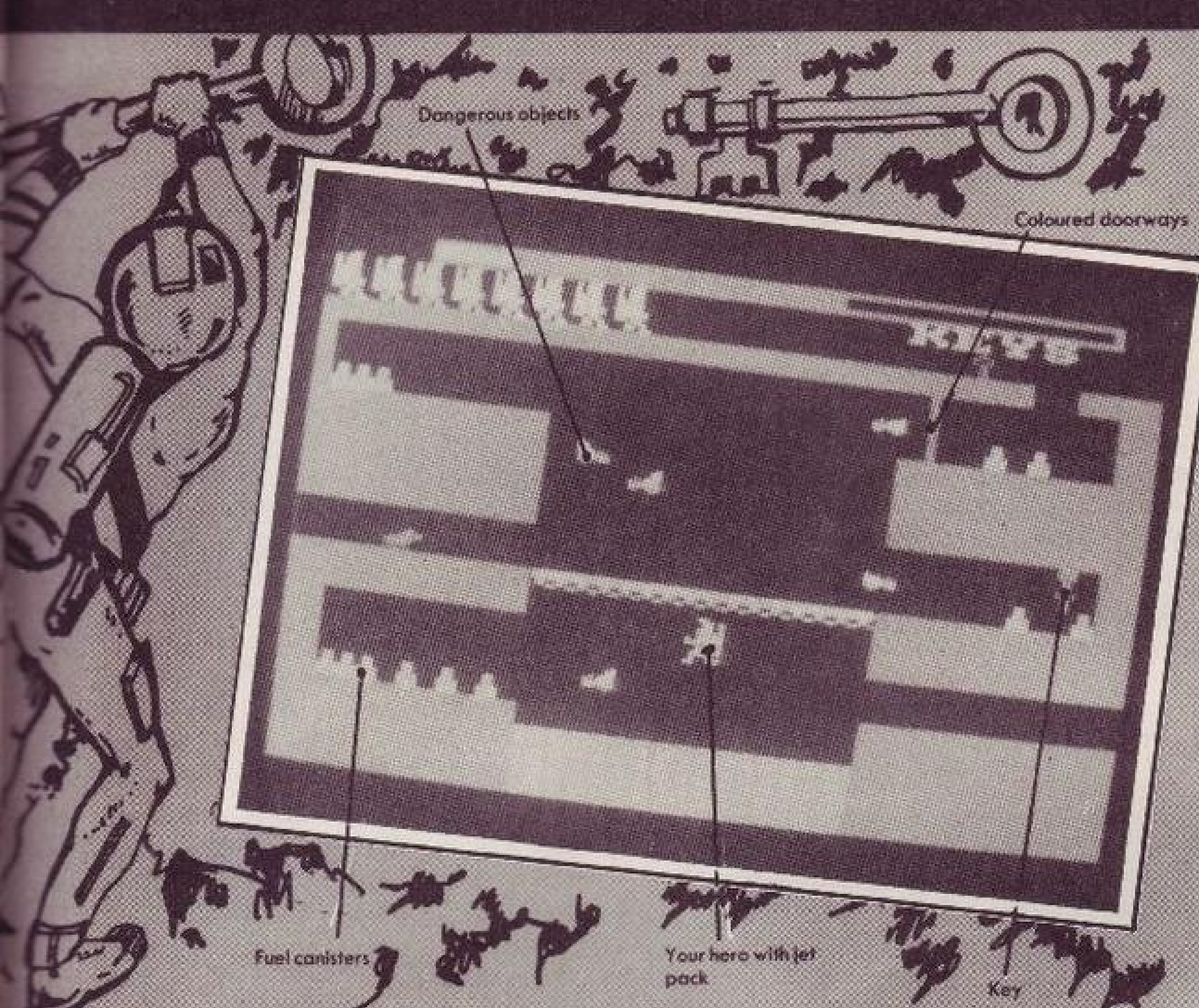
The game is set on the planet Doom (rings a bell, but no doors) where you have to find five keys hidden somewhere in the thirty locations. You control a character with a jet-pack who can walk or fly through the screens packed with danger.

Most locations have a number of coloured walls which initially cannot be passed through. When you've got the right colour key the walls no longer stop passage and new areas of the game are opened up. In this manner collecting one key will enable you to go and find another. It will also open up sections where jet pack fuel is contained. This is the stuff that keeps you up in the air and in the initial set up there's plenty of it about. There are different coloured keys and doors but one of the keys (the yellow one) is in three pieces and has to be pieced together. There is even a teleport function in one area.

SECOND OPINION

After recent Mastertronic marvels this game came as something of a disappointment. The standard arcade adventure fare left me far from satisfied, and the absence of shooting struck me as a real drawback. I'm not saying it's bad – far from it – and at £1.99 you shouldn't really grumble. But Mastertronic now have such high standards to maintain that anything less than excellence is enough to make you cry.

PC



The hazards come in three different forms: homing, pattern following and static. The homing ones are the nastiest since they are fast moving men who scuttle towards you like something out of a zombie movie and can move through any obstacle at all. To avoid them you need quick reactions and the ability to fool the man into letting you sneak past. He looks extremely silly coming towards you but he's highly dangerous.

Other moving dangers are robots, guards and birds but these follow patterns so that they can usually be snuck past with some careful timing. Most of these are crudely animated again but quite nicely drawn. Non-moving hazards have to be learnt by experience like spikes, bushes and pillars and can be difficult to avoid in tight corners. The problem arises when you need some close manoeuvering because it's difficult to position accurately with the jerky control. There are also points that shoot bullets and these act like Gatling guns, spinning round and blasting intermittently.

The thing that makes this more than just a simple exploration game is the screen design facility which enables you to change all of the static objects on any screen. You can put in or take out dangers, fuel supplies and all the other features excluding the moving objects. These don't appear on the editing screens but when you return to the game proper they are back in evidence.

You are still tied to the defined character set but can completely redesign the game layout to make it easier or harder. Once the game has been altered it can be saved to tape and reloaded for later use. This still doesn't make the game brilliant but for the price it should give a fair amount of entertainment with an infinite variety of possible challenges.

BW

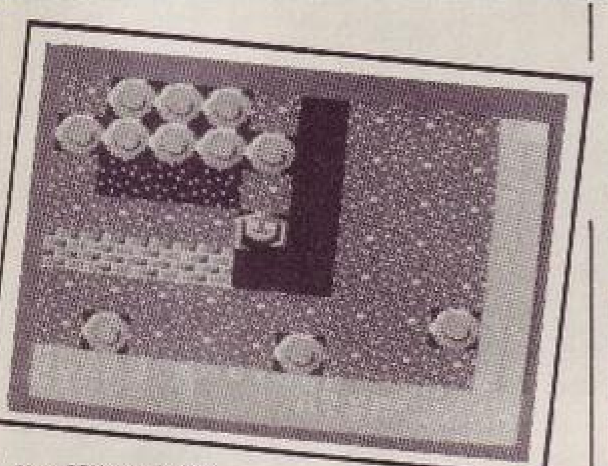
GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **The initial 30 locations are tough.**
- ▶ **Screen design allows lots of variety.**
- ▶ **Nice variety of dangers and obstacles.**
- ▶ **Colour-coded doorways make life complicated.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Graphics and sound are mostly simple.**
- ▶ **Not much mental stimulation involved – just exploring.**

GRAPHICS	59%
SONICS	26%
GRAB FACTOR	63%
STAYING POWER	67%
A A RATING	66%



Your REM stands next to a pile of rocks and radioactives

slower pace to *Boulderdash* and with the graphic inadequacies won't set the pulse racing.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **20 levels.**
- ▶ **Some stages are difficult.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **The scrolling is diabolical.**
- ▶ **Control is difficult.**
- ▶ **It's thoroughly unoriginal.**
- ▶ **The whole game seems to operate at slow motion pace.**

GRAPHICS	32%
SONICS	37%
GRAB FACTOR	33%
STAYING POWER	49%
A A RATING	39%

MAGIC

Macmillan Software, £8.95 cass, keys only

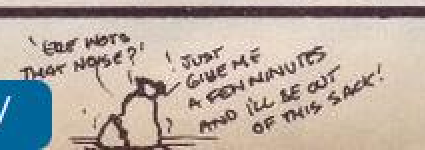
This is the latest in Macmillan's rather strange software range. Strange, because the programs are neither games nor straightforward learning programs, but aim to combine the best of both these worlds. This program, unfortunately, seems to have ended up with the worst.

The program, with the accompanying booklet, is supposed to teach the young beginner the rudiments of magical skill: the booklet is useful and informative, but the program really is a waste of time.

In the booklet you get instructions and diagrams teaching you how to perform a number of classic magic tricks such as making a coin disappear, producing an egg from nowhere or finding a card chosen by a member of the audience. The program aims to let you rehearse these tricks wiht the aid of 'a unique assistant – your computer.'

Well, give me a person any day. The graphics represent a stage with curtains and flickering footlights. You rehearse the trick with the computer. For instance, in 'Number divination' a series of figures will appear. You, the magician, key in what you think should be correct. If you're right, a crocodile will emerge from a box and gobble up the number. It's pretty boring, but if you stick at it it will probably instil the magical routine in your memory.

You can also sequence a complete show

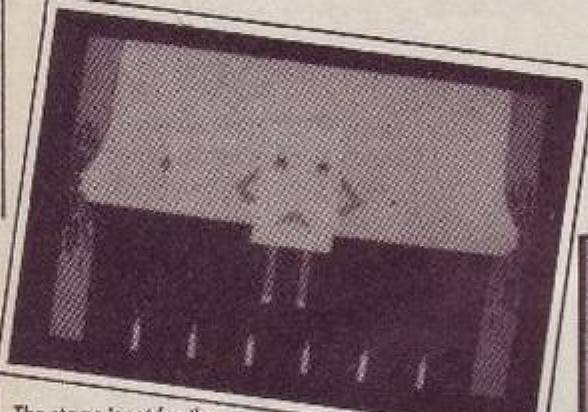

'ERE WOTS THAT NOISE?!
JUST GIVE ME A FEW MINUTES AND I'LL BE OUT OF THIS SACK!

SECOND OPINION

This game didn't conjure up much excitement in me except for when I decided to make it do a disappearing act. Everything is so long and drawn out that it hardly seems worth finding out the secrets of the trick because it won't interest anyone for long as an actual show. Most of the graphics were uninspiring and even the varied tunes didn't raise much interest. If I were you I'd just buy a book – the program is superfluous and too much like hard work getting through.

BW

and choose the musical accompaniment from a number of tunes. Then you can go through the whole thing with your 'unique assistant'.



The stage is set for the magical events

The trouble with this program is that it will appeal only to those with a prior interest in magic and will pretty quickly exhaust even their patience and attention.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **The booklet.**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Neither one thing nor another.**
- ▶ **Very dull if you've no interest in magic.**
- ▶ **Very dull even if you do have an interest in magic.**

GRAPHICS	41%
SONICS	65%
GRAB FACTOR	35%
STAYING POWER	25%
A A RATING	37%

ALADDIN'S CAVE

Artic, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

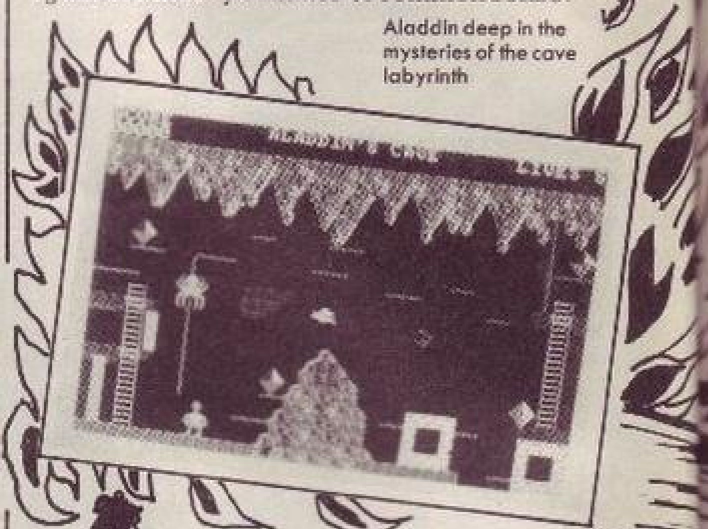
This game was written by the man who brought you one of the versions of *Tales of the Arabian Nights*. Initially I had the sinking feeling that this was a rip-off of said game. Fortunately, as you get into the game the similarity is mostly in the graphics with a good deal of variety in the gameplay.

There are only 16 rooms in the game but each one has a secret which has to be discovered in order to progress through to the finish. The screens mostly take the form of a platform layout around which Aladdin has to make his way in search of objects. These allow Alladdin to transform himself into different states in order to complete tasks or to remove obstacles from his way.

The screens are connected in a convoluted fashion which needs to be mapped out and most are full of dangers to which Aladdin can fall prey. Spiders, birds, falling rocks and monkeys all kill on contact, as do long drops off short ledges if you don't look where you're going. All these dangers move in patterns so that with a bit of observation and joystick dexterity Aladdin can get by them.

The set of objects on individual screens can be picked up to give you the power to make one of four transformations, into a bird, monkey, dolphin or genie. The objects have all to be collected before going off screen or they reappear in their starting places. Once gained, the power will enable Aladdin to get past different obstacles.

The abilities of each form are fairly obvious with the monkey being able to climb things, the bird being able to fly, the dolphin swim and the genie float in the air. You'll have to find out when these skills are required but, again, it's mostly a matter of common sense.



Aladdin deep in the mysteries of the cave labyrinth

There are some nice features in the game like a geyser that lifts things up and the repelling floor plates. The sound throughout the game is pleasant and atmospheric and if it does start to annoy it can be turned off leaving

ENDURANCE

CRL, £7.95 cass, joystick with keys or keys

This isn't just a game about endurance – it's one you'll need plenty of endurance to complete and become proficient at as well. The action revolves around long distance motor cycle racing in which a 24 hour race, game time, can last one hour in real time. Up to six players can have full control over two bikes each as they guide them through single races or full racing seasons.

The game is a strategy one similar to the authors' previous game *Formula One*, also by CRL. Bikes have now replaced the cars and the emphasis has been shifted from financial management to bike and rider efficiency. Twenty bikes take part in each race and up to six players can control two bikes each. You can choose a team name, bike make and racing colours before deciding the congifuration of the bike.

Three things have to be determined: the engine tuning, handling and tyre type. The tuning is a matter of balancing three gauges for power, safety and mpg while the handling is a similar balance between speed, safety and wear. These factors will determine what sort of bike you have, how fast it goes, how reliable it is and how economical it is on fuel. Another important factor is the tyres, which can be soft, mid or hard and will wear at different speeds.

The rider is another important factor and each bike has two riders who can alternate stints on the track. While driving their energy is depleted, but their skill and safety ratings won't change much. Now that you've got your team together it's off to the races.

All the bikes have to be prepared before the race and with six players all of the above processes can take a long time. Now the race is finally underway and the bikes will whizz left to right across the screen with a grandstand in the background. The top six are shown on the leader board with the top 16 in order on a status line. These continually update themselves as the race goes by at 25 times real time.

SECOND OPINION

I found this far too similar to CRL's Formula 1 *to be very entertaining. The idea is virtually identical the only difference being that you see bikes rather than cars on screen.*

PC

During the race many events can occur and changes can bemade to affect a bike's performance. Numerous problems like crashing, running out of fuel, engine trouble or bike retirements can all happen and will require pit stops. Once in the pits the mechanics have to attend to whatever difficulty has arisen including checking the brakes, tyres, engine, fuel and chassis if they need work. This takes time and your joystick dexterity will decide how much time is lost in the race.

Races can be anything from six to 24 hours long (not real time) so there is plenty of time for things to change throughout. You can even get the riders to try harder or take things easy during a race, or retire them if they are doing too badly.

The graphics are fairly simple although the pit stops are well done and the strategy is very tough to get right. The game may be too drawn out for many but if you like a game that can go on for hours and hours then this is for you.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Very tough strategy to master.**
- ▶ **Good pit sequences.**
- ▶ **Really long, complicated games are possible.**

just the sound effects.

The gameplay is fairly simple platform stuff until you discover the multiple powers, but I suspect that even then the game may not be complicated enough for many. Several ideas have been cribbed from *Arabian Nights* but the transformations do enough to make the game fairly original but still a little overpriced for what it is.

BW

SECOND OPINION

No, the graphics aren't terribly original. In fact, they're not at all original. But that didn't really bother me – I can only take so much originality at any one time. In fact, I quite liked the game. Many players may find it too easy, but I found it just right. There were some nice touches – the flapping birds, the monkeys – and the music was suitably mysterious. Not one of those tough, demanding challenges – but a fellow needs a rest sometimes.

PC

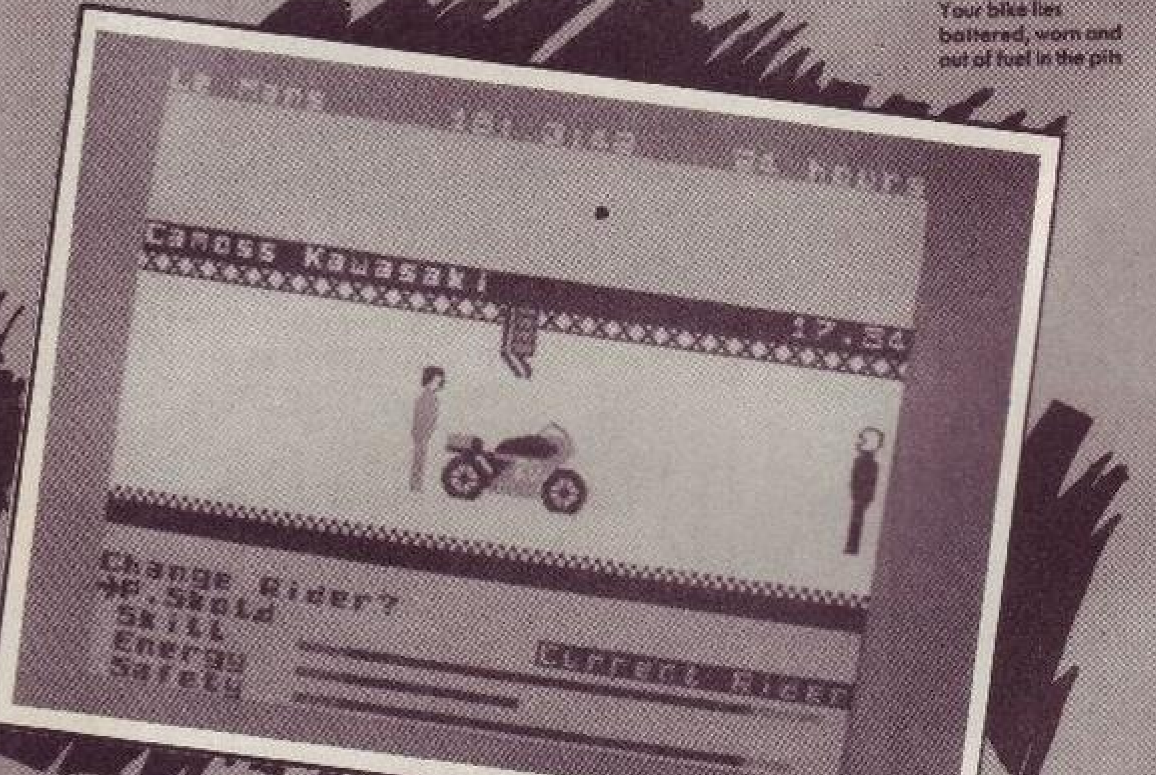
GOOD NEWS

▶ **Transformation into four different animals.**
▶ **Some interesting screen design and features.**

BAD NEWS

▶ **Small and mostly simple graphics.**
▶ **Not many screens to conquer.**
▶ **Platform element and similarities to *Arabian Nights* are unoriginal.**

GRAPHICS	58%
SONICS	64%
GRAB FACTOR	64%
STAYING POWER	51%
A A RATING	55%



Your bike lies battered, worn and out of fuel in the pits

BAD NEWS

▶ **Games may get very boring.**
▶ **Race graphics aren't exciting.**
▶ **There's an awful lot of preparation work, particularly with more than one player.**

GRAPHICS	52%
SONICS	44%
GRAB FACTOR	54%
STAYING POWER	67%
A A RATING	60%

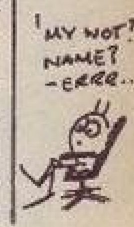
QUIZ QUEST

Alligata, £4.99 cass, joystick or keys

There's nothing like a good quiz program to keep you occupied when the telly breaks down at Christmas. This program supplies the goods in terms of volume of questions, but falls down a little in presentation.

The game is based on the Waddington game *Quiz Cards*, which may explain the curious system it uses. The multiple-choice questions – you get a choice of three possible answers – are presented in sets of eight. If you don't answer them all correctly you have to go to another set of eight before returning to the questions you got wrong before. Of course, you may make a mistake in the new set, in which case you have to go to another set, before..

Since there are only three alternative answers to any question you will eventually get them right, but this process seems to be unnecesarily tedious. It's made worse by the fact that you're not told an answer is wrong at the time you make it – so there's none of the jubilation or misery you might feel if you knew how you'd done.

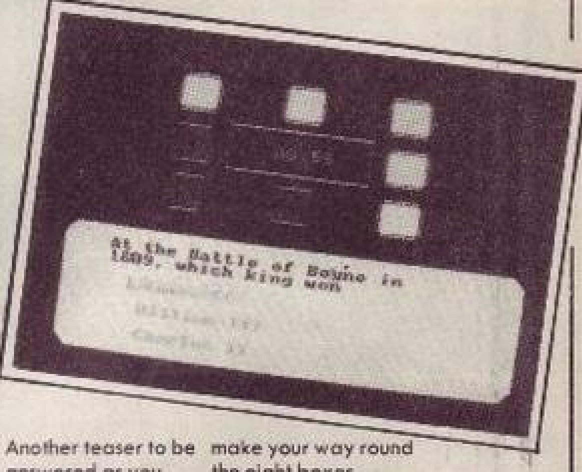

'MY WOT?- NAME? -ERRR....

SECOND OPINION

I can't say I found this game very stimulating because it misses the point of quizzes by not letting you play in a group and not telling you where you got it right or wrong. Group participation would be much more fun – where's the satisfaction in beating a machine at multiple choice questions? The questions themselves seem well put together and pretty tough too but a bit more thought on the gameplay side could have improved things a lot.

BW

The screen display is nothing to write home about: a collection of boxes changing colour which seem to have little to do with the game. Answers are entered by pressing fire or space bar when the cursor is on the one you want. Multiple choice has the advantage of doing away with annoying spelling errors – though the program does ask you about a planet called 'Uarnus' – but does mean you've got more than a reasonable chance of guessing the answer.



At the Battle of Boyne in 1689, which king won

Another teaser to be answered as you make your way round the eight boxes

The questions themselves – and let's face it, this is the important bit – are spread over categories including Sport, TV, General

Knowledge and Pop. The cassette inlay claims over 200 questions per category, and I wouldn't dispute that. The same questions, though, will recur quite frequently in different sets.

You'll find some pretty easy but many fiendishly difficult. What's the average life span of a goose? Even after you've got it by a process of elimination you're not likely to remember for very long.

A bonus is the Preparation file which allows you to make up around 200 of you're own questions. A lot of scope there for the unscrupulous. For another £4.99 Alligata will provide a second tape with over 2,000 questions on 10 different topics. Should keep you going for a bit.

PC

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ **Lots of difficult questions.**
- ▶ **Make up your own quiz.**
- ▶ **Extra question tape available**

BAD NEWS

- ▶ **Takes ages to load.**
- ▶ **Graphics and sound a bit naff.**

GRAPHICS	13%
SONICS	19%
GRAB FACTOR	55%
STAYING POWER	57%
A A RATING	51%

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Send your comments on a postcard or the back of an envelope to: *Voice of the People, Amstrad Action, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.*

Remember that you should aim for something like the Second Opinion boxes in our reviews: you don't need to explain the game, but give your opinion of it. Why not add your own ratings to the comment, so we can compare them even more closely to ours?

GEOFF CAPES STRONGMAN, Martech AA Rating 68%

Far better than *D.T's Decathlon*, even if it only has six events. The graphics are very good, but there is little sound. The events are not just waggling joystick events and a detailed - apart from the log-chopping.
Jeremy Nargi

FIGHTING WARRIOR Melbourne House AA Rating 75%

If this game had been released before *Way of the Exploding Fist* then I'd have though it was great. But as it is I don't think it's as exciting and playable as *Fist*, although it's still miles ahead of most computer games.
David Baxter, Carlukie

CHIMERA, Firebird AA Rating 88%

This is very similar to Alien 8, but not as good. Sound is good but barely noticeable. Graphics are of a very high standard and in some respects area better than Alien 8. A bargain at the price.
Jeremy Nargi

When you first see this game you think 'Wow', but after the initial amusement has worn off you discover that there's really not an awful lot to it. Technically excellent, but lacking in playability.
David Baxter, Carlukie

YIE AR KUNG FU, Imagine AA Rating 92%

I really enjoyed this game. The graphics and sound are great. A variety of opponents makes it more enjoyable than *Fist*, and fewer commands mean it is easier to get in to. A pity you have to load in a new screen though. And only two of them! All in all, though, a great game
Ranjit Singh, London

By far the best martial arts game about - knocks spots off *Way of the Exploding Fist*. The graphics are truly brilliant and the sound pleasing to the ear. My only quibble is the difficulty. I don't think it is difficult enough, having reached the seventh opponent on my second game. Nevertheless a superb game.
David Baxter, Carlukie

Your opponents are varied and interesting but not impossible to beat once a strategy is discovered. Graphics are excellent, and the game has a real arcade feel to it. One niggle is the controls, which, though there are only ten, are complicated. At first, the only way to play is by thrashing around wiht the joystick and hoping. Jumping is excellent with a great whooshing sound accompanying it. Overall, *Kung Fu* is a very polished, pretty and addictive arcade game.
William Redgrave, Maidenhead

AMSTRAD
the name of the game

BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS Solar Software AA Rating 62%

Boring, boring, boring. Three years ago on a Speccy this game might have looked good. But in 1986 on an Amstrad it looks positively ancient. To quote the great Billy Bragg: 'Blasting aliens is not enough in days like this.'
David Baxter, Carlukie

3D QUASARS Solar Software AA Rating 38%

I remember playing this game on a Commodore 64 some three years ago, and I though it was pretty good. However three years have passed and the standard of software has got better. You're better to leave this one on the shelf.
David Baxter, Carlukie

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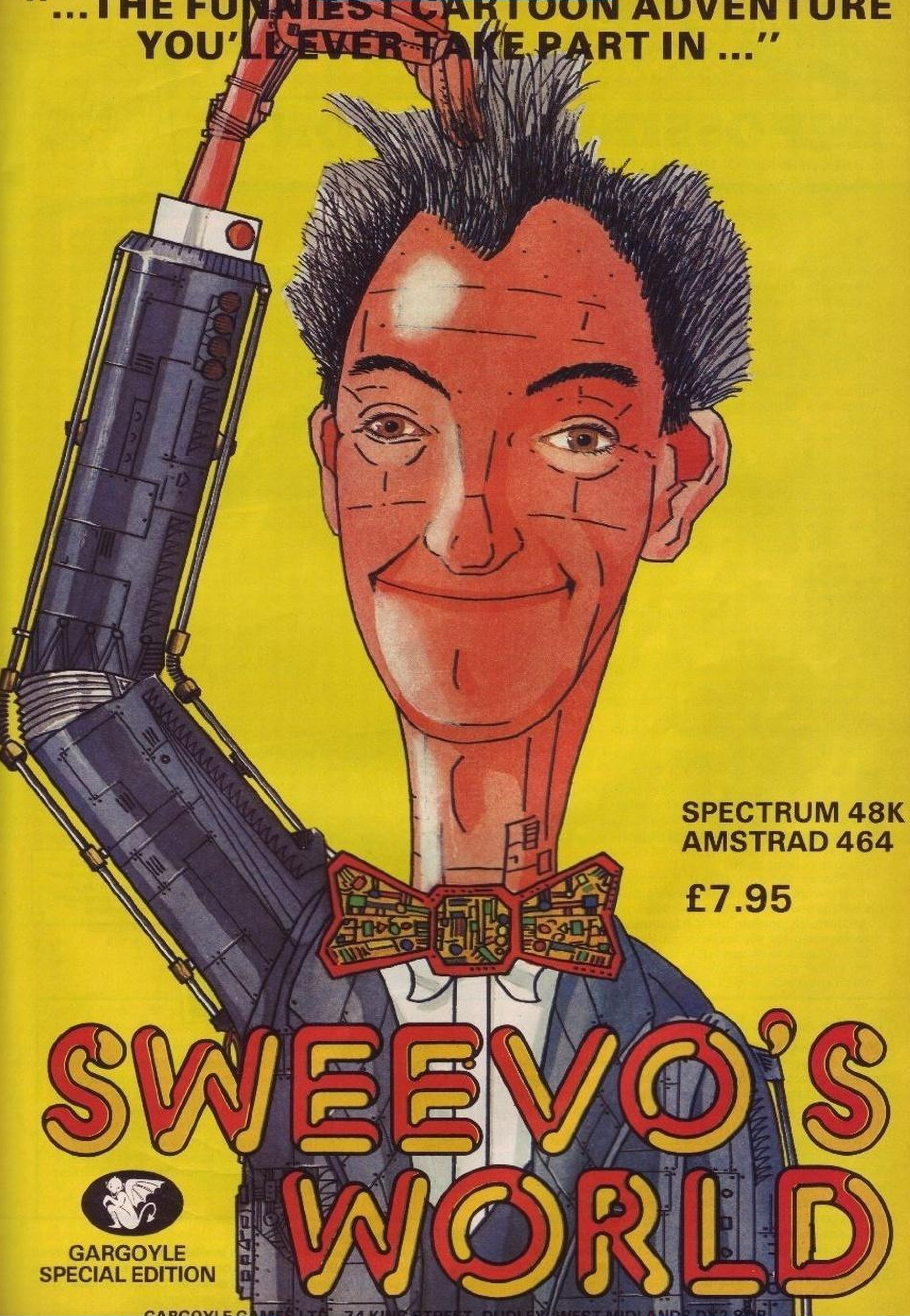

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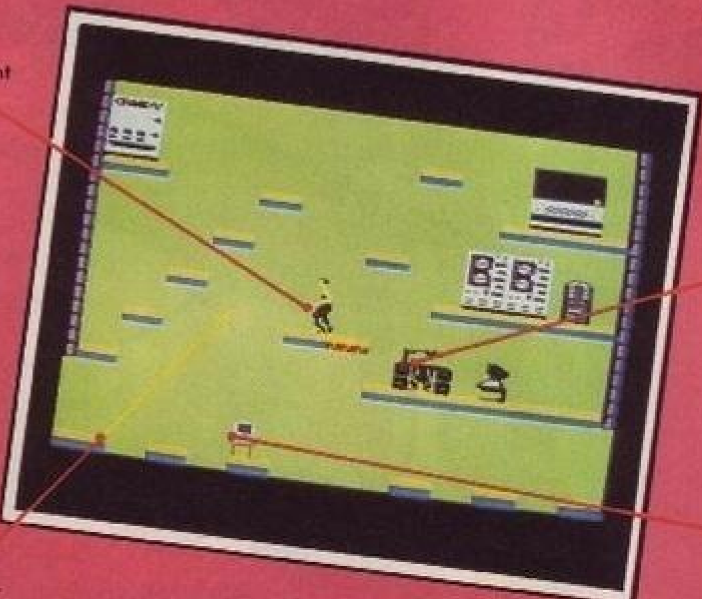
IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

Sneak preview of the big conversion from US Gold

The evil Professor Elvin Mindbender


The heroic, cartwheeling agent

Pieces of furniture to be searched

A computer monitor – If you've found the right password you can use it to temporarily disable the robots

Gaps in the floor – fall through here for a scream

When this game was released on the Commodore 64 in early 1985 it made people's eyes pop out of their heads. There on screen was a large character leaping and cartwheeling around hazard-filled rooms in the most astoundingly detailed animation. At last a screen hero one could really take pride in controlling.

Although it's unlikely that Amstrad owners in 1986 will respond with quite the same enthusiasm, it's nevertheless a conversion that's been eagerly awaited. We were granted an exclusive peek at a version of the game as it existed some 10 days before scheduled completion. As expected, the converters haven't quite been able to match the remarkable animation of the original. But the signs are that Amstrad *Impossible Mission* will offer every bit as much in terms of gameplay and challenge.

The scenario is that you are an agent who's penetrated the deadly underground headquarters of Professor Elvin Mindbender and must search for the 36 pieces of his security code. If you fail to find them and crack the code inside six hours you end up with a puny score and the earth gets blown up.

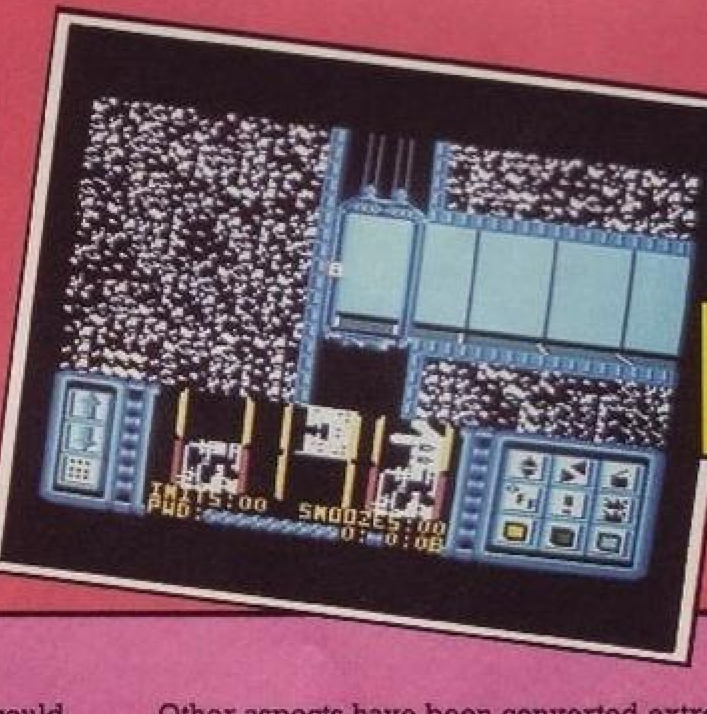
The evil prof's stronghold is made of 32 rooms interconnected by a lift system. Most of the rooms are guarded by robots and part of the skill of the game involves working out how to 'search' the different pieces of furniture in each room without being fried by robot laser. (Searching simply involves standing in front of each piece of furniture for a set time: easy except when you have company.)

You could describe *Impossible Mission* simply as a super-sophisticated platform game since you get round the rooms by leaping from platform to platform. But leaping as you haven't seen before. The agent actually somersaults in the air each time he jumps – a habit which would give any self-respecting *British* spy a heart attack.

There's also a good deal of sophistication involved in the code-cracking business. The codes appear in shapes which you have to match together in sets of four using a pocket computer which allows you to slide them around a visual display. Each set gives you a letter which you have to rearrange to obtain a nine-letter word. Doing this successfully will allow you to break into Elvin's room and destroy him.

An interesting feature of the game is your own indestructibility. If you get robot-zapped or disappear through the floor of a room after misjudging a leap, you don't die, you just get your deadline moved forward by ten minutes. So you have some 30 'lives' at your disposal and you'll probably need them.

The copious instruction leaflet is cleverly presented in the form of an agent's briefing document. It includes an entertaining potted life history of Mindbender which explains that reason he turned evil was through excessive addiction to computer games, a lesson to us all.



The main lift which carries you from room to room. While in it you can access your mini-computer

How the Amstrad version compares

If you've already seen this game on the Commodore 64 you could be a little disappointed with this version. For a start the superb digitised speech of the original is lacking, a fact which means that despite the capabilities of Amstrad's hardware, no program has yet made it talk anywhere near as well as it could. Something to do with the money that has to be spent to license digitised speech.

Where this is likely to be most sorely felt is in the lack of the blood-curdling scream emitted every time the agent dies. However the finished program is expected to include a scream simulated using 'white noise'.

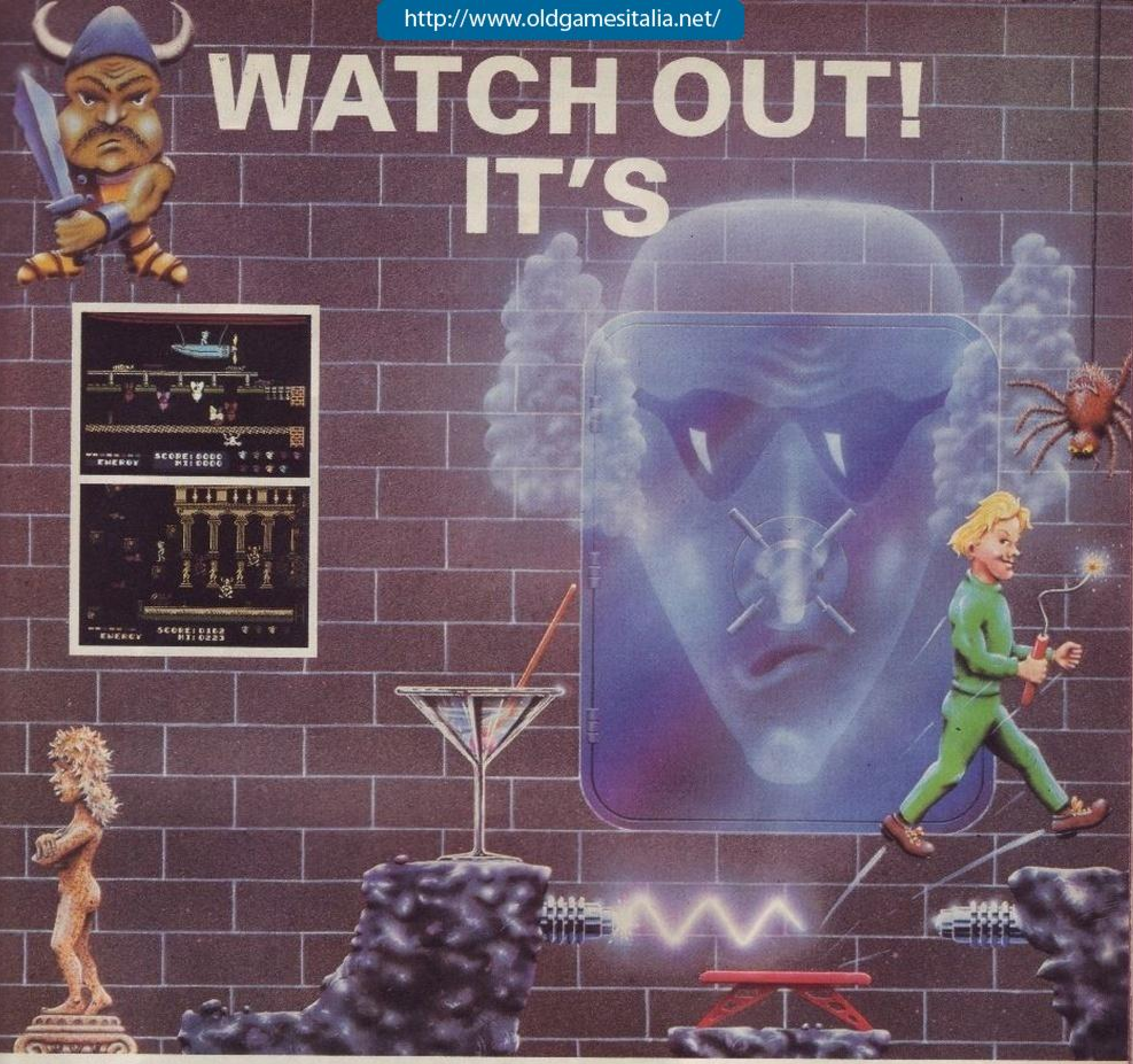
The graphical representation of the main character is also not quite as good as the original – the programmmers have gone for multi-colours rather than high resolution, and the animation isn't as stunning, although it is still impressive. On our version the animation of the agent running right uses eight different pictures, and the programmer tells us he could yet put in more.

Other aspects have been converted extremely well. The lift makes a very authentic noise as it moves and the pieces of furniture are colourfully depicted. Although our version did not include the enemy robots, we are told that these will emulate the original version with 16 different robot categories. (These vary from moron robots who sit there doing nothing at all, to highly-intelligent droids which simply deceive you into thinking they're moron robots doing nothing at all – until you move close to them.)

Certainly there looks to be enough quality in the program satisfy anyone coming to it fresh.

Release details

***Impossible Mission* is likely to be available by the time you read this. It costs £9.95 on cassette (or free with a subscription to Amstrad Action – see our special offer) and £13.95 on disk (from Amsoft). Standby for a full review in our next issue.**


WATCH OUT!
IT'S
ENERGY SCORE: 0000 HI: 0000
ENERGY SCORE: 0162 HI: 0223

DYNAMITE DAN

94%
Crash Smash

"What makes the game is the graphics – large, witty, bizarre and beautifully animated . . . each screen has something remarkable, and horribly difficult puzzles . . . Dynamite Dan is not just another Miner surrogate and is at least as essential to your collection."
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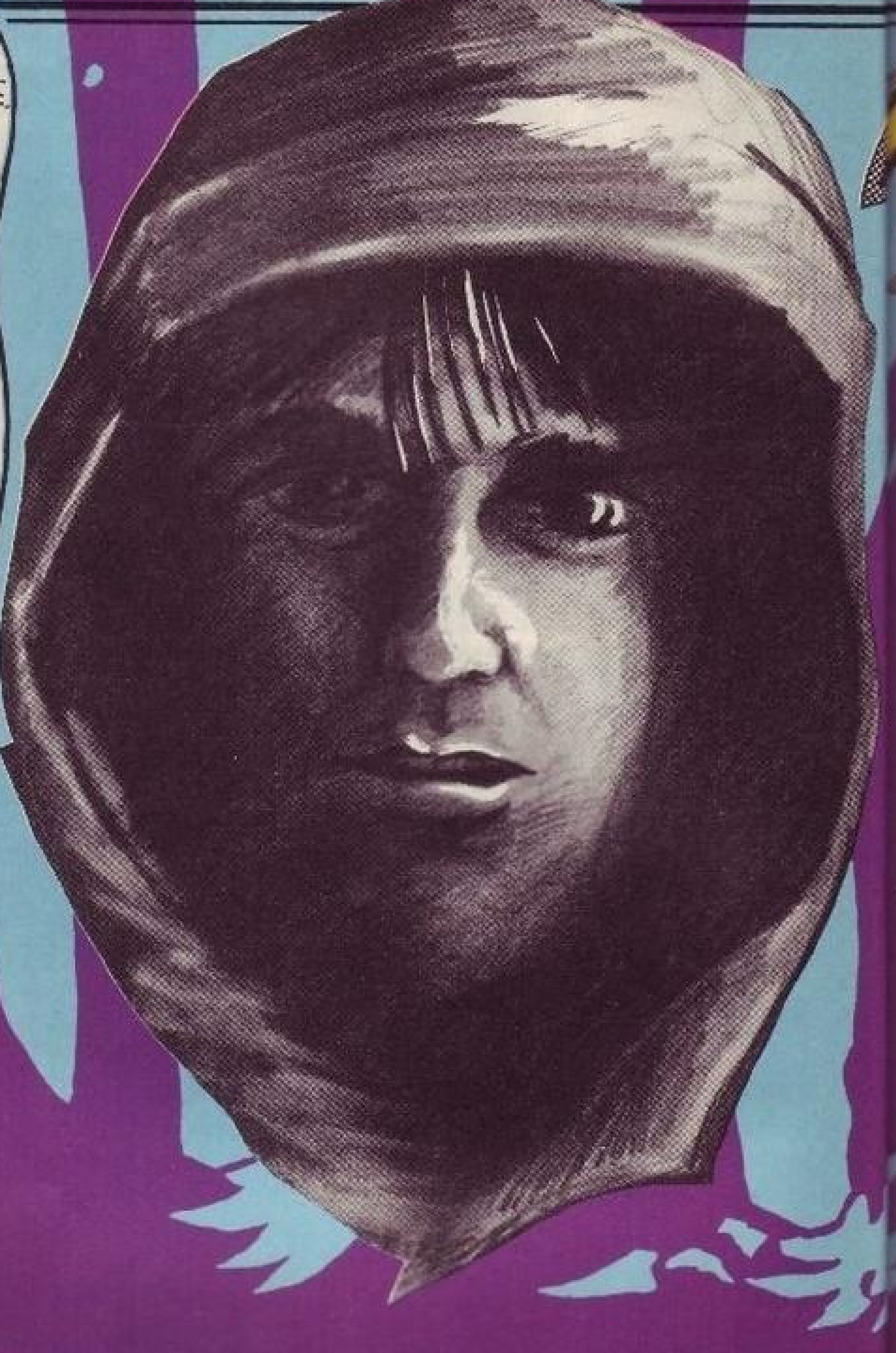
AND – as if that wasn't enough – we also get to grips with *The Worm in Paradise*, the first game to be written using Level 9's new adventure system with 1000+ words of vocabulary and ultra-complex inputs. Read on, and see what the world of Eden is coming to – it's a disaster, and only YOU can put it right!

Pilgrim

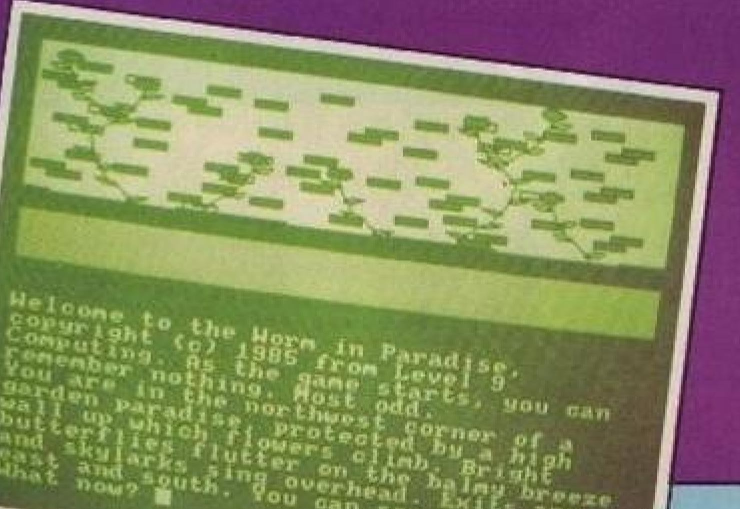


THE WORM IN PARADISE

Level 9, £9.95 cass

The Cowled Crusader was positively trembling with excitement as he loaded up this game. A massive vocabulary, a highly intelligent parser, and the promise of a great game with 220 graphics locations. AND it's from Level 9. Can it be as good as it sounds – because it sounds out of this world!

Well, out of this world it certainly is. The third and final game in the Silicon Dream Trilogy (after *Snowball* and *Return to Eden*), *The Worm in Paradise* is set once more on the planet Eden. Many years have passed since Kim Kimberley's arrival on the planet, and there is now an advanced technological civilisation flourishing here – administered largely by robots, with everything for the benefit of the human inhabitants.



```
Welcome to the Worm in Paradise.
copyright (c) 1985 from Level 9
Computing. As the game starts, you can
remember nothing. Most odd.
You are in the northwest corner of a
garden paradise protected by a high
wall up which flowers climb. Bright
butterflies flutter on the balmy breeze
and skylarks sing overhead. Exits are
east and south. You can see a bench.
What now?
```

Monochrome madness

Come on Level 9! This just isn't good enough! Here's what monochrome Arnold owners are going to see when they first enter Eden, and it isn't exactly impressive! Just in case you're wondering what's going on in that picture, it's meant to be a brick wall with flowers growing up it. Looks more like a case of Video Blight to me. Still, the text is good – but why can't we have the best of both worlds?

Life is almost never-ending, thanks to organ transplants. It is also lazy – though compulsory, work is of minimal importance and involves more status-seeking than financial reward. Robots provide everything you need, and even keep the place in order. Fuzbots keep a close eye on the citizens, and administer fines if and when misdemeanours are detected.

At the start of the game you find yourself in a garden with no apparent means of escape. Four walls enclose an area of typical Level 9 beauty – roses, lilies, and a magnificent apple tree in the centre. You also find yourself staring at the familiar Level 9 graphics and wondering when they're going to sharpen their pencils a bit and start producing some decent pics. I have to admit that some of the drawings in *Worm* are better than previous material, but graphics is still one area where Level 9 can't match the competition of, say, Interceptor, or Adventure International.

◆

There's the usual imaginative Level 9 game design that becomes evident from the very start in *Worm*. The garden is only a fantasy, and within a few moves you find yourself waking up in Reveline's Dream Parlour in the heart of Enoch, capital city of Eden. There is, incidentally, another way out of the garden if you persevere – but I'll leave that up to you!

If dreams came true here on Earth as they seem to do on Eden, I'd readily plump for a holiday in Enoch. There's certainly plenty of tourist traps, from a casino complete with one-armed bandit (and I MEAN a one-armed bandit!) through to the museum where you can ogle an inflatable plastic replica of Kim Kimberley, and the pet shop where you can fix yourself up with a cute little Dagget (an electronic dog).

Travelling around in the capital city is a bit like discovering the London Underground for the first time – you're continually getting lost on north-bound pedways, east-bound pedways, south-bound pedways, and so on. What's more, one intersection looks very like another, but with the aid of a pencil and paper you'll soon find yourself feeling very much at home. You can even try and go to work, if you want, but to start with you're unlikely to do

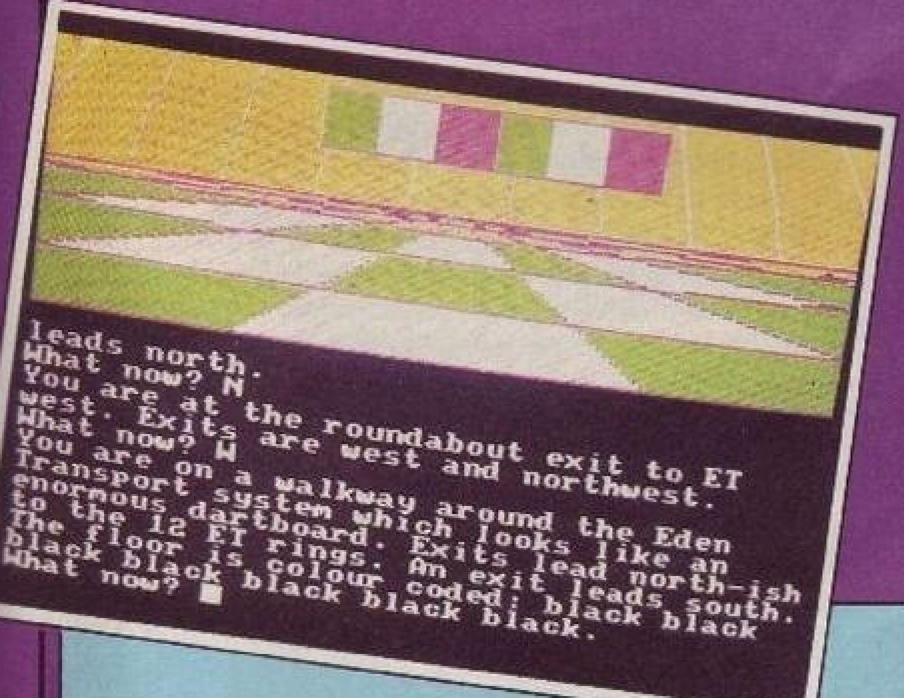
ADVENTURE

anything except wander around exploring the different locations.

All this takes place using Level 9's new system. It does have some very attractive features. First, the graphics and text are displayed in parallel, so that you can enter a command while a picture is still being drawn. This is a great help if you want to move round in a hurry but still want to get a glimpse of the scenery. If you really want to get a move on you can turn off the pictures altogether using WORDS.

Secondly, you can input multiple commands, separated by either AND, THEN, or full stops/commas. This is a very flexible system – in fact the most flexible that I can think of (bar Infocom, of course, and *Lord of the Rings*). The best thing about it is that the program really does make sense of what you're typing most of the time, so errors are few and far between unless you're careless.

The final big difference over previous games is the size of the vocabulary. You can LOOK, of course, but you can also LISTEN and even SMELL, and that's only the beginning. Suffice it to say that I did not have vocab problems once while playing the game, which isn't surprising since Level 9 claim that the program will understand over 1000 words. Just to put you in the picture, that's certainly on a par with early Infocom games, and about five times as much as most other present-day cassette adventures. What's more, even if you do use a word that the program doesn't understand, it will tell you why it doesn't understand it rather than simply rejecting it. For example, you may be told that the word has been used simply as a descriptive word in a location text and is not really significant in the game, or perhaps that you're trying to use a word in the wrong way. This is a big and welcome change from previous Level 9 games, which were notoriously unfriendly and said things like 'Arfle Barfle Gloop' if you entered something that wasn't in the vocab.

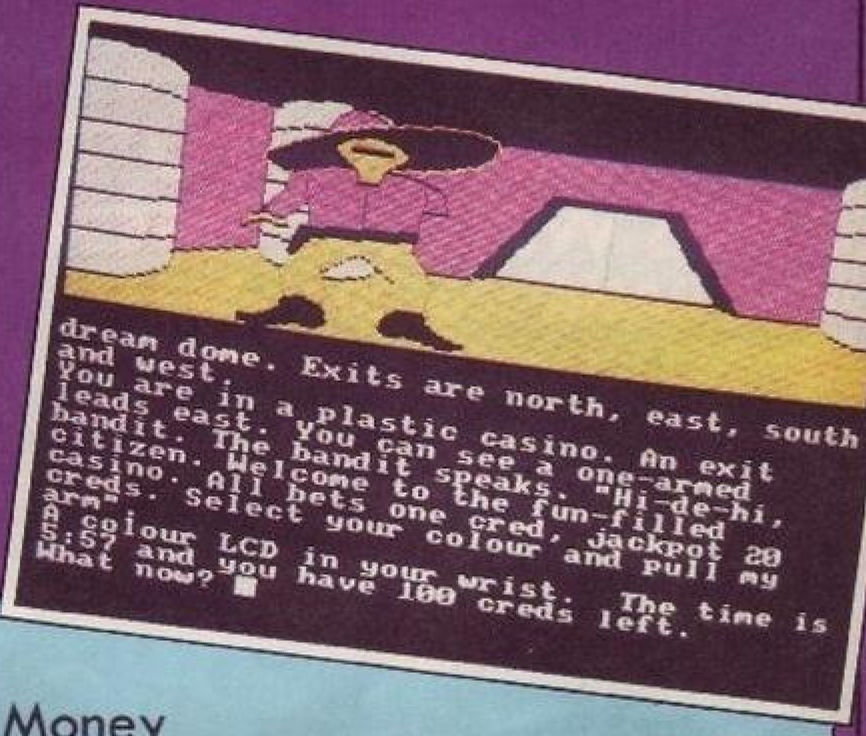


```
leads north.
What now? N
You are at the roundabout exit to ET
west. Exits are west and northwest.
What now? W
You are on a walkway around the Eden
Transport system which looks like an
enormous dartboard. Exits lead north-ish
to the 12 ET rings. An exit leads south.
The floor is colour coded: black black
black black black black black.
What now? █
```

Transport

Oh oh! It's back-to-*Snowball* time! Those of you who've played this game may well have had trouble with the colour code system in trying to find your way about. Well, believe me, that was peanuts compared to the system on Eden. Not only do you have to negotiate the pedways and roundabouts, but to get anywhere of significance you've got to master the Eden transport network. It all works with colours, and there are 40 million possible destinations! Aaaaaghghg!!! I get the sinking feeling that Level 9 are going to run out of clue sheets on this one! Reserve yours now!

Even for dedicated Pilgrims, I reckon there's a good few days' work here. The aim of the game is to discover your identity, work your way up in society and change the world! And there's certainly quite a lot you'll want to change. From the moment you leave Reveline's Dream Parlour you'll begin to appreciate that the pleasure of Eden are very double-sided. Try popping into the local pie shop (located in the park) and you'll see what I mean – looks delicious, tastes vile, and that about sums up Eden society.



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dream dome. Exits are north, east, south
and west.
You are in a plastic casino. An exit
leads east. You can see a one-armed
bandit. The bandit speaks. "Hi-de-hi,
citizen. Welcome to the fun-filled
casino. All bets one cred, jackpot 20
creds. Select your colour and pull my
arm"
A colour LCD in your wrist. The time is
5.57 and you have 100 creds left.
What now? █
```

Money

You start the game with 100 creds and a little watch-like device to tell you how much money you've got left and what time it is. Eden may be a techno-paradise, but believe me the moulah is as important here as it is in Oxford Street! If you run out, it's a fifty cred fine for debt, and if you want to know how you pay it, just take a look at your arms and legs and ask yourself this question – in a planet where every one lives for ever by replacing their organs, where do you think they get the spare parts from?? Yessir, you're worth your weight in gold in this game. Just pop along to the body bank and cash in!

There's just one thing about this game that makes me uneasy. Suppose you lived on a planet like Eden, where everything was plastic and sculless. And suppose you wanted to change things. What would you do? You'd probably sit down and play a game like this one, wouldn't you?

LORD OF THE RINGS – a sneak preview

The Cowled Crusader managed to get his paws on an early version of *Lord of the Rings* this month. Here's a quick snifter of things to come...

Although it was running on a Spectrum, it seems the Amstrad version is going to be pretty well identical. In addition to the program itself, you get a copy of The Fellowship of the Ring and a small instruction booklet. It all adds up to a pretty bulky package, but if you think the package is bulky, wait till you try your hand at the game!

We will of course be bringing you full details of this as soon as we get a proper Amstrad version, but without giving too much away we can safely say that this game looks like being a compulsory purchase for those Pilgrims who can afford it. There are quite a few innovations in the program itself, including a clever

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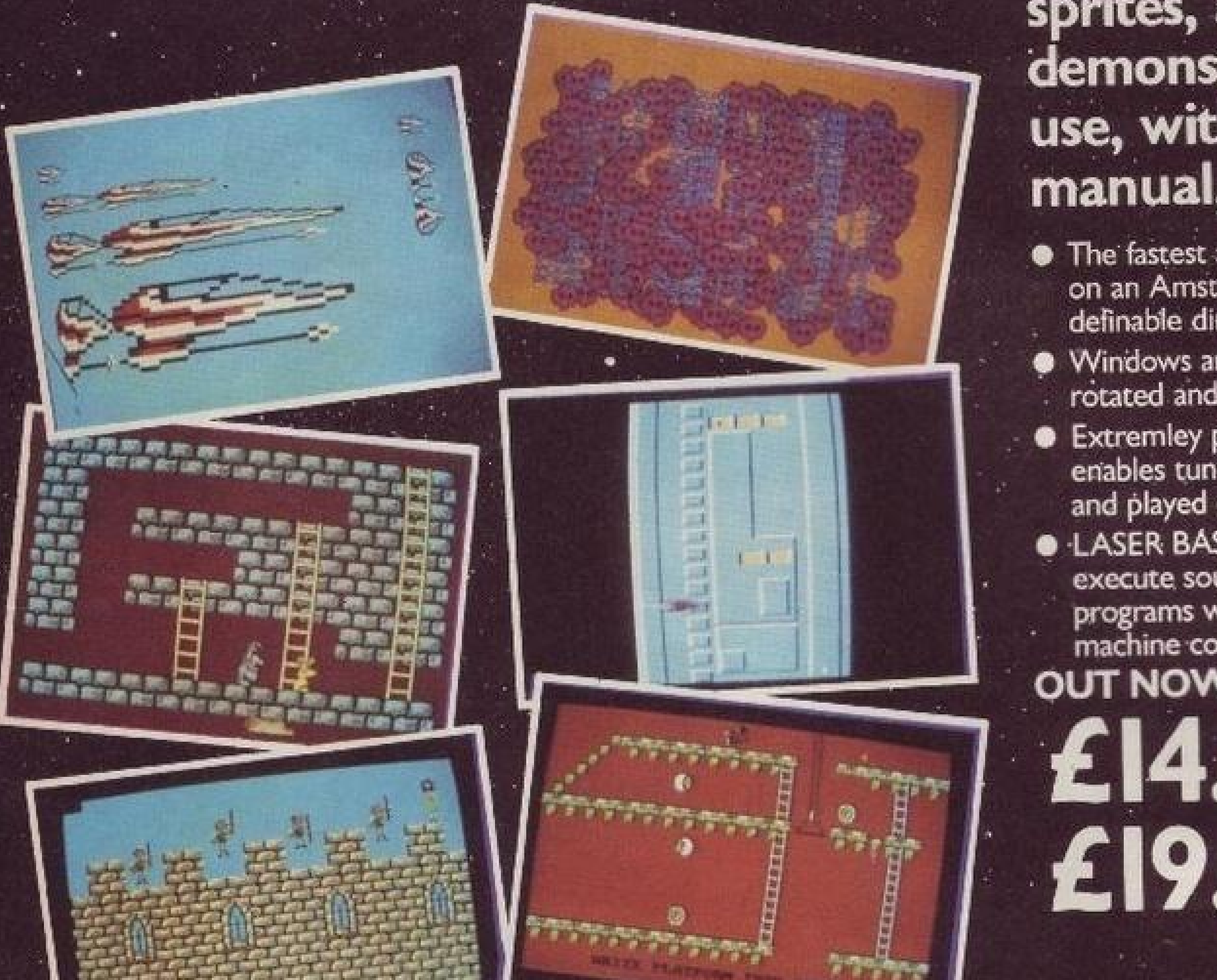

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way of showing which character is present by flashing up a small portrait of them at the side of the screen.

Other points include an extraordinary degree of interaction with objects – for example, there are three backpacks in the first location, and you can not only get a single backpack (or all the backpacks), and put things inside it – you can also tell someone else to do it for you! The communication with other characters is extremely comprehensive, and in addition you can actually control other characters directly if you wish, taking them off on little adventures of their own and returning to the main party later.

There aren't that many pictures, but the ones that appear are quite nice to look at – certainly better than Level 9, but not as good as some other Amstrad adventures. Although the location descriptions themselves are fairly short, there's usually quite a lot to see and do in each place.

Finally, it's nice to see that the program designers have gone out of their way to add in extra material, so that even if you knwo the Tolkien books backwards, you won't find things too easy. And, of course, you don't need to have read the books to enjoy the game. All in all it looks like an excellent package, though on the Spectrum it was running appallingly slowly – let's hope they manage to speed up the response times a bit for Arnold.

The Pilgrim Peeks... The Pilgrim Pokes...

W D Grundy has been doing some interesting POKEing about in Level 9's *Red Moon*...'I have found a way where you need never use a hit point in anger when you meet a foe such as the cloaked statue. Type in 'Bury statue', he will never be seen again – and never come back as a ghost. This applies to anyone or any object. I'm sure this must be a bug – I found the word 'Bury' when I disassembled the name table in the program and it made me wonder...'.

Unfortunately the Pilg wasn't able to check out the 'bury' command because his copy of *Red Moon* had gone walkies, but, WDG, I doubt whether it was a bug. It's far more likely to be a Level 9 debugging instruction that will enable them to play the game without having to engage in too much combat! However, I'm sure many Red Mooners will be grateful to you for pointing it out.

Meanwhile, we've had a number of letters concerning *Red Moon* and transferring it to disc. This is one of those annoying programs that overwrites the Amsdos variables and is therefore not easy to deal with. The Pilg will look into it and get back to you. In the meantime, Level 9 point out that their games are still 6128/664 compatible – for Red Moon, just type |tape: run"". For *Colossal Adventure, Dungeon Adventure, Snowball, and Lords of Time*, type:

```
|tape (return)
memory &2fff (return)
load "adventure",&3000 (return)
```

and then, when the program's loaded, CALL &3000.

Last month's program to transfer *Robin of Sherwood* has one slight annoyance – although it sets up a disc version, it doesn't include a 'save to disc' option. To implement this feature as well, you will need to transfer the 'booter.bin' file as well. To do this, simply run the following short BASIC program with the Robin tape in the cassette deck:

```
10 MEMORY &5FFF
20 |TAPE.IN: |DISC.OUT
30 LOAD "booter.bin"
40 SAVE "booter.bin",b,&6000,&100,&6000
```

Then delete the program, and enter the following:

```
10 MEMORY &5FFF: LOAD "booter.bin": CALL &6000
```

Save this with the filename 'Bobby' onto the same disc as the booter and ROBIN1 files. You can now play the game by entering run "bobby" and be able to save your current state of game to disc instead of tape.

Finally, as promised, here's the program for transferring *Classic Adventure* from Melbourne House to disc. I find this is a good game to have on hand for showing off to non-adventurers, since it is – after all – the adventure that started it all in the first place. *Classic* is easy to transfer. Enter the following listing. Put your *Classic* tape in the cassette unit (fully rewound), and RUN it with a disc in the drive to receive the file. Note that you'll need at least 27K free on the disc.

```
10 |TAPE.IN: |DISC.OUT
20 MEMORY &11FF
30 LOAD "adv"
40 SAVE "classic",b,&1200,&6800,&1200
```

You'll now be able to play the game from disc simply by entering RUN "classic".

Don't forget, this section of the Pilgrim column relies as much on you as it does on me. So if you've POKEd a Balrog in the belly, let me know!

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Infocom Classic!

Here they are! At long last, Infocom, the world's greatest adventure house, has brought out its games in Amstrad format. That means you can now play such all-time classics as *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Zork I, and Deadline.* The Pilg's got all the info, so read on and discover why, if you haven't already got a disc drive,you should be rushing out to the shops immediately to buy one!

Yup, that's about the only drawback about these superb games–you can only play them if you've got a disc-drive. In fact, at the time of writing, you could only play them on a PCW 8256, since Softsel (the distributors) were having trouble getting the formatting right for the CPC range. However, we're assured that by the time you read this you'll be able to hitch through the galaxy on any Amstrad disc-equipped system.

To mark this special occasion, we're running a launch competition with Softsel, details of which you'll find on these pages. We're also giving you a quick taste of the different games available. This month we'll look at *Zork* and *Hitchhiker's* – next month we'll introduce you to the joys of *Deadline* and *Seastalker*. Better hang onto your hats, Pilgrims, because these games really do take some beating.

Infocom Info

Just who are the guys who churn out these miraculous games? If you saw a recent edition of BBC's Microlive program, you'll have seen some of the Infocom staff in action at their headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Here's the info.

Infocom was founded back in 1979, when two scientists with stars in their eyes left MIT (the Massachusetts Institute of TEchnology) to start their own software company. Previously they'd been working with a high-level language called MDL, which allowed them to contruct intelligent parsing systems to interpret English language inputs.

Their first product was *Zork* (now known as *Zork 1*, since it was followed by two more *Zork* games) and this, together with its two successors, has sold over a million copies at $40 apiece! That makes Infocom a big turnover company, and since then they've successfully dominated the US games charts with versions of their software for virtually all American machines, from the IBM PC down to the Commodore 64.

Infocom games are still written in a special language, which is a bit like the LISP computer language. For those of you who don't know your LISP from your blitters (and who does?), this is a list-processing language much used in artificial intelligence work. LISP enable objects and concepts to be grouped together in lists – obviously useful for adventure games. Although the games are written and designed by individuals, they are really the result of a team effort. The best example of this approach is *Hitchiker's*, which was the result of a collaboration between British author Douglas Adams and Steven Meretsky of Infocom. Steve was also responsible for *Sorcerer*, an excellent Infocom game that hopefully Softsel will add to the catalogue in the near future.

One thing's for certain – British software houses will really have to keep on their toes now that a major British piece of hardware is being targetted by such a talented software company. The one thing we can all be sure of is that competition like this can do nothing but good for us Pilgrims – the battle for Adventure-Software-House Supremo is on!

Explore the Galaxy on your Arnold!

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy was received ecstatically when it first appeared on the Commodore 64 and hence made its way onto the British home micro scene. There can be hardly anyone reading this column who hasn't either heard the radio series or read the books by Douglas Adams. They must have made him a very rich man, and now they can make you a very amused Pilgrim.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
DON'T PANIC!
INFOCOM
INTERACTIVE FICTION
SCIENCE FICTION
STANDARD LEVEL

Like most recent Infocom games, *Hitchhikers* comes in a very plush box, with a little compartment at the back holding the disc and various other goodies. The goodies include a badge saying 'Don't Panic!', a pair of Joo Janta 200 Super-Chromatic Peril-Sensitive Sunglasses, some fluff (presumably from your navel), your own Microscopic Space fleet (so small it's invisible), and destruct orders for your home and planet, signed in triplicate by various local and interplanetary dignitaries. You also get no tea.

The game comes in two files, Hitchhik.com and Hitchhik.dat, and all you have to do is load up the disc under CP/M, type HITCHHIK and away you go! You play the role of Arthur Dent, anti-hero of the original story, and to begin with you find yourself inside your humble suburban home, with a bull-dozer descending on it intent on committing grievous architectural harm.

Although *Hitchhiker's* is text-only, like all Infocom games, the descriptions are nothing short of hilarious. Furthermore, the parser is out of this world. You can enter things like 'Marvin, who is Zaphod?' if you're getting confused (you will be) or 'Zaphod, what about the Vogons?' if you think Zaphod is being a bit cool about Vogons.

Furthermore, the program will always let you know exactly what's going on if you enter the wrong commands. The first six lettersof each word are scanned, and if a word isn't understood the program will be quite clear about what the problem is. Since you've got a vocabulary of around a thousand words to play with this isn't likely to be much of a problem, however.

Hitchhiker's is a tremendous game. It follows the original story in a most details, but even if you know the radio series backwards you're going to have difficulties. Trying to get a babel fish out of a babel fish dispenser was my first real problem. Every time a babel fish comes out, it shoots across the room and falls through a hole in the floor! So, I tried blocking the hole, whereupon a floor-cleaning robot appeared from nowhere, grabbed the babel fish and disappeared with it! Aaaaaghghgh!!!

This game is more expensive than the others in the range, costing £24.95 as opposed to £19.95. It's still worth every penny, and it's not often that the Pilg says that about a game over fifteen quid, let alone one over twenty. This game could really force a number of British software houses to think twice about the sort of product they're putting out – otherwise they, too, will have to throw in the towel!

Zork I

This famous trilogy comprised Infocom's first three games – they were smash-hits from the start and are still very high in the US charts. Softsel are only releasing the first game initially but don't be disheartened – it's a classic in its own right and the other games in the trilogy are bound to follow sooner or later.

Zork is a close relative of *Colossal Adventure* in many respects. It starts you off outside an old house and once you've got inside you'll find a lantern and a sword – both essential for your underground wanderings. You'll also find, provided you persevere, an entrance to the Underground Empire, complete with trolls, kleptomaniacs, and wizardry of all descriptions.

Zork, like any successful game, has spawned a mythology all of its own. Foremost amongst these is Frobozz, a magical foundation who are consistently churning out new devices for magicians young and old to use in their daily business. This sub-culture is admirably resurrected in a later Infocom game, *Sorcerer* – probably one of the best magical adventures of all times and definitely worth harassing Softsel for in the hope that they will release it for Arnold.

Zork, like *Colossal*, involves collecting treasures. There are twenty lying around, but actually getting them back to the trophy case provided is extremely difficult. One of them, the dreaded Egg, is really a very elaborate red-herring and you should be extremely careful how you deal with it! Others will only find their way to the trophy case via someone else (who may well take them without asking). As in *Colossal*, finding treasures isn't even half the

Your greatest challenge lies ahead–and downwards.
ZORK I
The Great Underground Empire
An INTERLOGIC prose adventure
INFOCOM

Infocom Up for Grabs!!

To celebrate the launch of the Infocom Classics, The Pilgrim has teamed up with Softsel to offer four lucky readers a COMPLETE set of the new releases – that means over £100.00 worth of software, bringing you mint copies of *Zork I, Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Deadline, Seastalker, and Planetfall*. That's one prize that will keep you hooked to you micro for years to come, so grab a pen and enter now!

Here's what you have to do. Imagine that you are writing a new adventure for Infocom, and part of the adventure involves the following location:

"You are suddenly confronted by an old man with a long beard. He has a key in his hand and offers to give it to you if you can answer his questions correctly. You know that the key will open the door to the Sultan's treasure house, so you agree to accept the challenge..."

All you have to do is think up a riddle for the old man to ask in the game. It can be any riddle you like, and on any subject, but it must NOT be longer than 50 words in length, and it MUST contain the word 'pilgrim' at least once. Then fill in the form below and post it to the Pilgrim at Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PS. The four most original and witty riddles will win copies of the five Infocom Classics from Softsel. Get cracking! Closing date for entries is February 13th.

Name:

Address:

My riddle is (not more than 50 words and including the word 'Pilgrim'):

The answer to my riddle is:

Please complete in not more than 20 words: If I entered the Underground Kingdom, I would...

battle - it's stashing them away that counts.

Zork is, however, beginning to show its age a bit. It has a smaller vocabulary than some of the more recent cassette based games – *Lord of the Rings and Worm in Paradise*, for example. There is also very little character interaction worth talking about. However, as with all Infocom games, the quality of design and the vividness of the location descriptions makes this a true adventure classic. This is indeed a pilgrimage for every Pilgrim, and even at £19.95 it's worth every penny.

	Atmosphere	Interactio
Worm in Paradise	75%	88%
Hitchhiker's Guide	92%	94%
Zork 1	88%	86%

PILGRIM'S POST

'Hail from Baggins', begins S.Lota's letter from London. He's one of the many enthusiastic adventurers who are STILL stuck in *The Hobbit*, and needs to know the answer to the riddle 'Four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon, and three legs in the evening'.

This set the Pilg thinking about riddles in general, and this one in particular. I risk revealing my extreme old age by pointing out that this riddle (although asked by Gollum) is in fact thousands of years old and is indeed a riddle of some renown, being the one that the Sphinx asked Oedipus outside the gates of Thebes. The answer, for those who are still stuck, is in this month's Clue Pot (or in Greek mythology, if you want to check!).

'To put it mildly,' continues friend Lota, 'your column is just simply wicked, deadly, devious, demon, bad etc, or to put it more simply, excellent...' Hmmm. Don't put it mildly next time - try a bit of exaggeration! But this does bring me to another point I've been meaning to make. The Pilg is hard pressed to keep up with all the games he receives each month, and is interested in contacting some honorary Pilgrims who would like to contribute to the column on a free-lance basis.

There are two reasons for this. The first is that it means we could cover more games. The second, and more inportant reason, is that it would enable us to print Second Opinions about the games we do review. Although The Pilgrim is immensely conceited in all matters adventurous, I do realise how risky it can be to offer just one personal opinion on a game. So – if you'd like to help out, can be reached on the telephone, and can write legibly, clearly, and intelligently about adventures, please get in touch with me through Amstrad Action.

Peter Brown has already written in, offering his services to other readers on a number of games. He joins this month's Lords of Adventure, alongside arch-Magi Tony Treadwell. Tony has sent me details of his adventure club, Questline. It's an impressive package - you join over 350 other members and get a number of facilites, including a Swap-It (original software only) service and a regular newsletter with hints and tips. You can contact Tony at the address in the Lords of Adventure column.

The Wilkinses (Paul and Clare) are at it again. They've written in to let me know that they've now finished *Warlord* after 'being swallowed in the swamp numerous times, thanks to Paul following the beautiful girl all the time, and me (Clare) swimming in the pool with the salt and insisting that we did need the pig! We both think it's Interceptor's best yet, as you can keep going so far and yet miss the obvious. Perhaps we aren't up to other adventurers' standards, but we do work at it, and we are only 11 and 13 years old.' Congratulations, Wilkinses, and all I can say is that if Paul is running after strange women through swamps at that age, I hate to think what he's going to be like in a few years time!

Peter Caton is just one of many readers who are frustrated by software houses failing to include some form of tape-to-disc transfer facility. For those of us who do have drives, it is indeed a

Chart Hits!

Unfortunately, because of early Christmas deadlines, we had to go to press before the previous issue was available on the streets. For this reason, all you Pilgrims out there won't have had a chance to fill in your chart forms and get them back to the Pilg, so we'll be delaying the first chart appearance until the next issue. Don't forget – you could qualify for a free copy of your favourite game just by filling in the form below and sending it off. It's a great chance to participate in an all-time first adventure-only chart, which will let us all know what games everyone's playing and encourage software houses to pay more attention to us deserving Pilgrims. Look forward to hearing from you,

Pilgrim

To The Pilgrim.

My favourite three adventures are:

1. Game: ________ Company: ________
2. Game: ________ Company: ________
3. Game: ________ Company: ________

My reasons for putting game number one above as first choice are:

If I'm a lucky Pilgrim and win a free game, I should like to receive a copy of:

My address is (BLOCK CAPITALS ONLY):

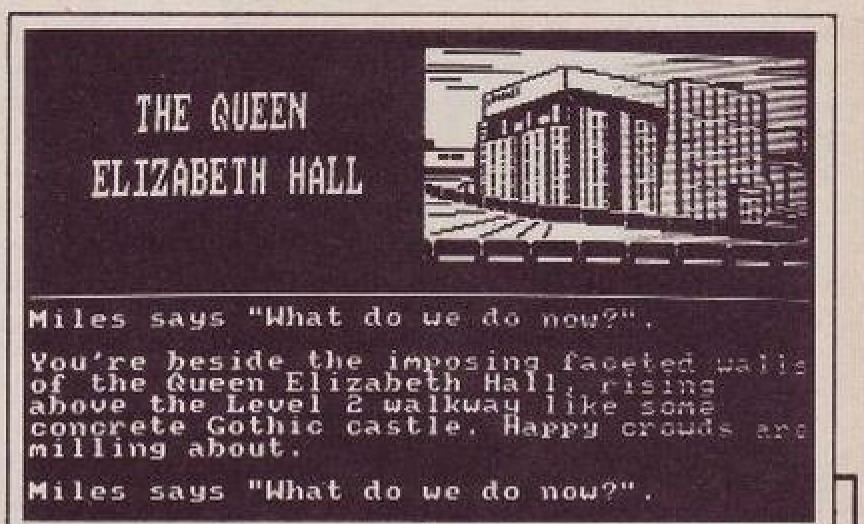
challenge	AA Rating
85%	87%
89%	93%
86%	86%

perennial source of annoyance to have to wait what seems like hours on end to load a game. I'll do my best to include more information on this subject in the Pilgrim Pokes column, but we have to give this subject second place when we need to get in more reviews. Peter also wants to know about a Firmware Manual for the 6128 - I don't know about other programmers, but I've so far encountered no problems with using the jumpblock entries in the existing firmware manual for the 464/664 machines. In theory they should be identical, so, Peter, I should pop out and buy a copy of that.

That's all for this month. Don't forget to keep in touch. Readers can always get me c/o Amstrad Action, or if you have a modem, on Prestel/Micronet mailbox number 919994654. Telecom Gold users can reach me on 83:jnl251. As we go to press I'm about to leave for Liverpool to start setting up the adventure bulletin board, so please, if you have any ideas of what you'd like to see on that front, let me know. Best wishes, The Pilg

ADVENTURE NEWS

Next month the Pilgrim looks at *Runestone*, BT's new megagame with *Lords of Midnight*-style graphics, gets to grips with Infocom Classics *Deadline* and *Seastalker*, tries to get a copy of *Lord of the Rings* on the Amstrad, and brings you all the latest from the world of Adventure! Keep a straight back, a strong staff, a clear head, and may the Gods cast spells of light upon your path until we meet again.



```
THE QUEEN
ELIZABETH HALL

Miles says "What do we do now?".

You're beside the imposing faceted walls
of the Queen Elizabeth Hall, rising
above the Level 2 walkway like some
concrete Gothic castle. Happy crowds are
milling about.

Miles says "What do we do now?".
```

Shot from Global Software's next release, Old Scores. This game looks like being a real winner - you can change modes in the game (so you can have 40 column or 80 column text), there's some excellent music, and the graphics are...well...the graphics are pretty brilliant in the Pilg's humble opinion. We'll check it out in the next issue.

Level 9 On the Moon – Again

Level 9 are already starting work on a sequel to *Red Moon*. This marks the end of their 'science-fiction' phase (The Eden Trilogy) and takes the company, and game designer Pete Austin, back to the more familiar ground of magic, mystery, and suspense. The new game, to be called *The Price of Magic*, will be launched in the spring of 1986.

Genesis Reborn

Camel Micros, whose *Genesis* adventure generator was reviewed by the Pilgrim last month, have come up with an upgraded version. You can now have expanded graphics options that include infill with any user defined pattern and faster plotting. Other enhanced features include a multi-command language parser, multiple colour sets, and pixel positioning of user-defined characters.

At present the new version is only available via mail-order, for £8.50, but existing users can get an upgrade for £2.00 by sending in their cassettes. Note that all graphics will have to be redrawn to ensure compatibility, although TEXTURE files on both versions are compatible. Contact Camel Micros, Wellpark, Willeys Avenue, Exeter, Devon, EX2 8BE.

Adventure International

Stand by for the *Fabulous Four*, soon to be released by Adventure International, and featuring advanced features not previously seen on AI games.

First, there are going to be complex inputs, which is quite an advance over some of the previous games (like *Robin of Sherwood*) which the Pilg has consistently rated downward because of their primitive vocabularies and parsing. Second, you will be able to control two characters in the game, rather like *Lord of the Rings* or *Magician's Ball*. Combine these factors with Scott Adams' popular programming style and Marvel characters, and this game sounds pretty and looks promising.

Create an adventure – and win a disc-drive

Fancy a free disc-drive? Even better – fancy writing your own adventure and seeing it published by a commercial software house?! Fame, fortune, and freebies could be yours by entering our Write-Your-Own-Adventure competition – and you don't even have to program it!!

Last month's review of the *Graphics Adventure Creator* from Incentive should have awakened you to the possibility of writing your own professional game without having to master even a single line of BASIC or machine code. In fact, the Pilgrim reckons that *GAC* is going to do for the Amstrad what *The Quill* did for the Spectrum, and that soon we'll be seeing many home-brewed games coming onto the market with scope and standard limited only by your imagination.

Just to set the ball rolling, the Cowled Crusader has joined up with Incentive Software (who publish *GAC*) to offer the following challenge to AA readers: think up an original idea for an adventure game, describe it in less than 400 words, and we'll richly reward the Pilgrims who produce the best scenarios.

The winner will receive a disc-drive and interface or (if he/she already has one) a second disc drive and 10 blank discs! Five runners-up will also receive either 2 blank discs or 10 blank cassettes. But that's not all...

The winning entry will be forwarded to Incentive Software for especial consideration as a forthcoming major adventure release. Should the game be released, the lucky Pilgrim involved will receive regular royalty payments and the thrill of seeing their game on sale to the public. What's more, the ideas submitted by the runners-up will also be considered for release if they are of suitable quality.

What you have to do...

Plan your adventure carefully, and then – in not more than 450 words – give a detailed description of the plot. You must also give (1) the number and type of locations (2) information onany characters involved and (3) a description of at least two puzzles that appear in the game.

Entries should be tidily and clearly written on A4 paper and sent, together with the form below, to: *The Pilgrim, Write-Your-Own-Adventure Competition, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PS.* Entries should arrive not later than 28th February, 1986. Good luck!!

Use BLOCK CAPITALS please.

Name:

Address:

I do/do not have a disc drive
(Delete whichever is not applicable)

DURELL DURELL

Three stunning new games for the new year from the west country's premier software house. Pete Connor goes all the way to Taunton to preview them for you.

In the county town of Ian Botham country – and Amstrad Action country – is one of Britain's classiest software houses, Durell. You'll know them from *Harrier Attack* and *Combat Lynx*. Now they've got three stunning new games poised to make a big impact on Arnold owners early in the new year. We've made the long and arduous journey to Taunton to bring you the good news of *Critical Mass*, *Saboteur* and *Turbo Esprit*.

CRITICAL MASS

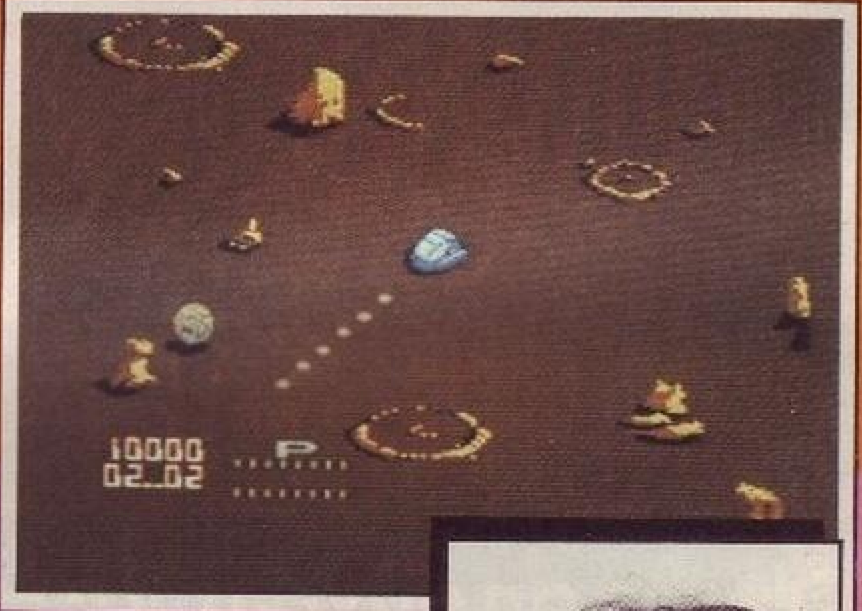
This sizzling game takes place on an asteroid, which seems only fair since it will remind many old hands of that arcade classic *Asteroids*. Old hands, though, may have to just sit back and admire – this is a game that requires the quickest of reactions and toughest of nerves.

It all happens on a remote asteroid in an outlying system of the Terra Foundation where nasty aliens have primed the anti-matter conversion plant to go bananas. You have to get through and deactivate the thing before it reaches critical mass and makes a critical mess of everything for a few thousand parsecs around.

You get around on the asteroid's surface in what the Durell mob like to call a 'skidoo', a neat and nippy little craft controlled by accelerating or by rotating left and right – just as in *Asteroids*. This 'vectored flight' will pose beginners some tricky problems. If you want to turn round the only way to do it is to rotate 180 degrees and thrust. Not easy when you've got a vicious alien on your tail.

Critical Mass has five distinct stages before you reach to your goal. After you've boarded the skidoo – which emerges, like Venus, from a clam-like garage – you set off across the hostile landscape, blasting anything in range. As you make progress, aliens become more numerous and much nastier. As well as gigantic golfballs rolling around, evil worms will rear ther ugly heads from the alien soil. Previously static mines will rise and come whirling after you; chaos clouds of molecular disorientation will blast you off course. Each gruesome death you die sees your ship exploding into a million particles of disintegration.

There's just about everything you could ask of a shoot-em-up in *Critical Mass* – speed, mayhem, fear and monsters from outer space, all executed in graphics of the highest quality. Experience the thrills and the chills soon on the Amstrad.



You skidoo zaps an alien or two

Critical Mass was programmed originally on the Spectrum by Simon Francis, an 18-year-old from Crewkerne in deepest Somerset. He's a pretty quick fellow at the keyboard: Robert White once brought him an Amstrad to consider, called back two weeks later to see how was getting on – and picked up a completed game.

Simon, though, is not doing the Amstrad version of *Mass*, which has been entrusted to Dean Lock, one of Durell's outside programmers.

Simon Francis – the Critical Mass man

SABOTEUR

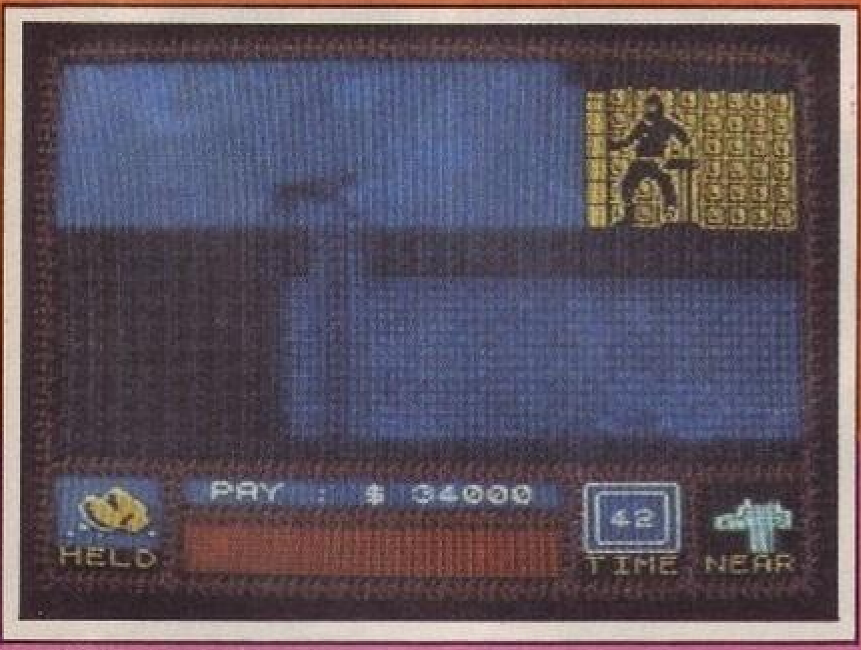
Do you sincerely want to be a hero? Do you really want to penetrate a top secret, high-security base, do battle with dozens of guards, wrestle with man-eating dogs, find and capture a staggeringly important disc, plant a bomb and then fight your way out to a helicopter on the roof to make good your escape?

Well, you don't need to join the CIA or the KGB – just have a go at *Saboteur*. An evil fascist dictatorship has taken ove the country – don't ask me *which* country – and your task as a mercenary is to capture the disc containing the rebel leaders' names and then escape before your bomb does for the baddies.

You won't find it easy – this game has 116 rooms. And they're not laid out in a simple way. You have to go through sewers, take underground trains in the right order, find your way through a maze of tunnels and a tangle of girders. So you'll need some nifty mapping skills.

Not to mention some hardened combat skills. From the moment you leap out of your dinghy at the start of the game it's action-packed stuff. You somersault and jump around, engage in karate chop-ups with guards, find and use a variety of weapons, all the while keeping an eye out for those snapping doggies. The animation is superb and these action scenes are really tough.

The fun and excitement of *Saboteur* are virtually doubled by the fact that after fighting and finding your way in to the building, you have to find and fight your way out – with that bomb ticking away all the time. The tension is almost unbearable.



Look out – there's a Dobermann about!

Saboteur is the work of 18-year-old Clive Townsend, a Welshman now resident in Taunton. It is, in fact, his first commercially released program – an earlier effort for Durell was deemed unfit for human consumption. *Saboteur* is all Clive's own work, from original idea through to programming of both Amstrad and Spectrum versions.

Clive has a slightly punk-look to him, an air accentuated on the day of visit to Durell by the fact that he had only recently emerged from his bed. Despite his predilection for the Pot Noodle, he did manage to eat some fresh-ish food at lunchtime.

Of the wacky bunch at Durell, Clive is by far the wackiest. One of his favourite hobbies appears to be jumping from bridges: only the week before my visit he had leaped 20 feet into the raging torrent of a weir. Unfortunately, he missed the torrent and hit the brickwork, incurring a painful heel injury.

Although he regularly stays up half the night working on programs, Clive doesn't think his long term future lies in computing: 'I want to be a child psychologist', he says, 'because I like kids and because I'm interested in people's brains.' Still, there might be time for a few more programs as good as *Saboteur* before Clive hangs up his assembler and dons the white coat.

TURBO ESPRIT

Mike Richardson first made his mark on the games playing nation with *Scuba Diver*, a strange and compelling underwater game on the Spectrum way back in the summer of 1984. Arnoldians, though, will probably know him best as the author of *Harrier Attack*, one of the games provided in the Amstrad introductory pack – a cool 100,000 must have been given away already, and as many more been sold over the computer counters of the country.

But Mike's most impressive achievement – until *Turbo Esprit* – is probably *Combat Lynx*, a fascinating game in which you pilot a helicopter over a large area while engaging a variety of enemies in combat. It's a game that's lasted really well: you only have to look at our Cheat Mode pages to see that.

Turbo Esprit is, in a way, a developement of the same idea. Instead of flying *over* a landscape, you drive *through* a cityscape. But the idea didn't come so simply. At one of Durell's Think Tank sessions Mike came up with the idea of *Honeycomb Planet*, a *Combat Lynx* derivative in which the player would guide his 'copter through the 3D caverns of a planet. It proved to be too slow. Robert White suggested a similar idea in a city. In the end they came up with *Turbo Esprit*.

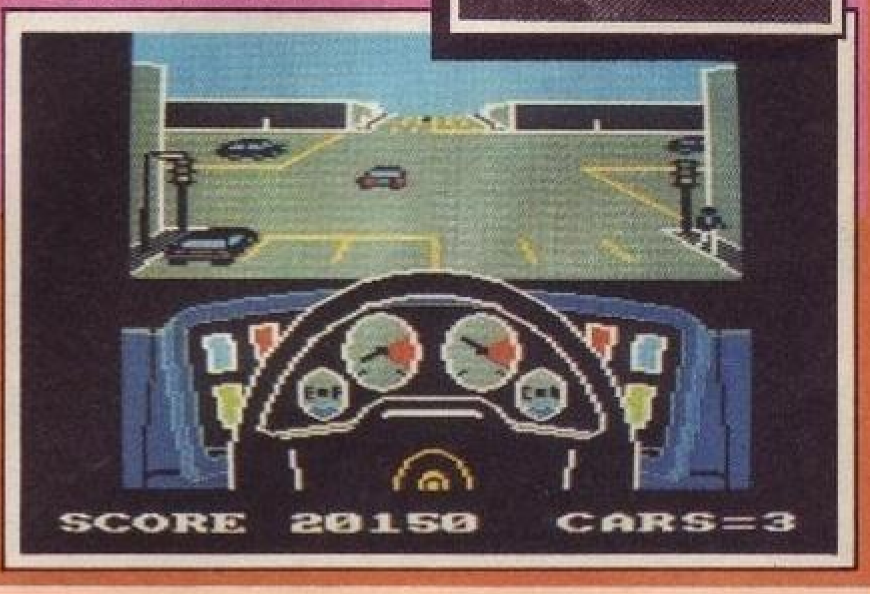
Apart from being Durell's best-known and best-regarded programmer, Mike is famous for what Robert White calls his 'laid-back attitude'. He also has one of the driest senses of humour this side of the Gobi Desert. Mike used to be a chemist. But, as he says, 'It gets a bit boring after the first ten years'.

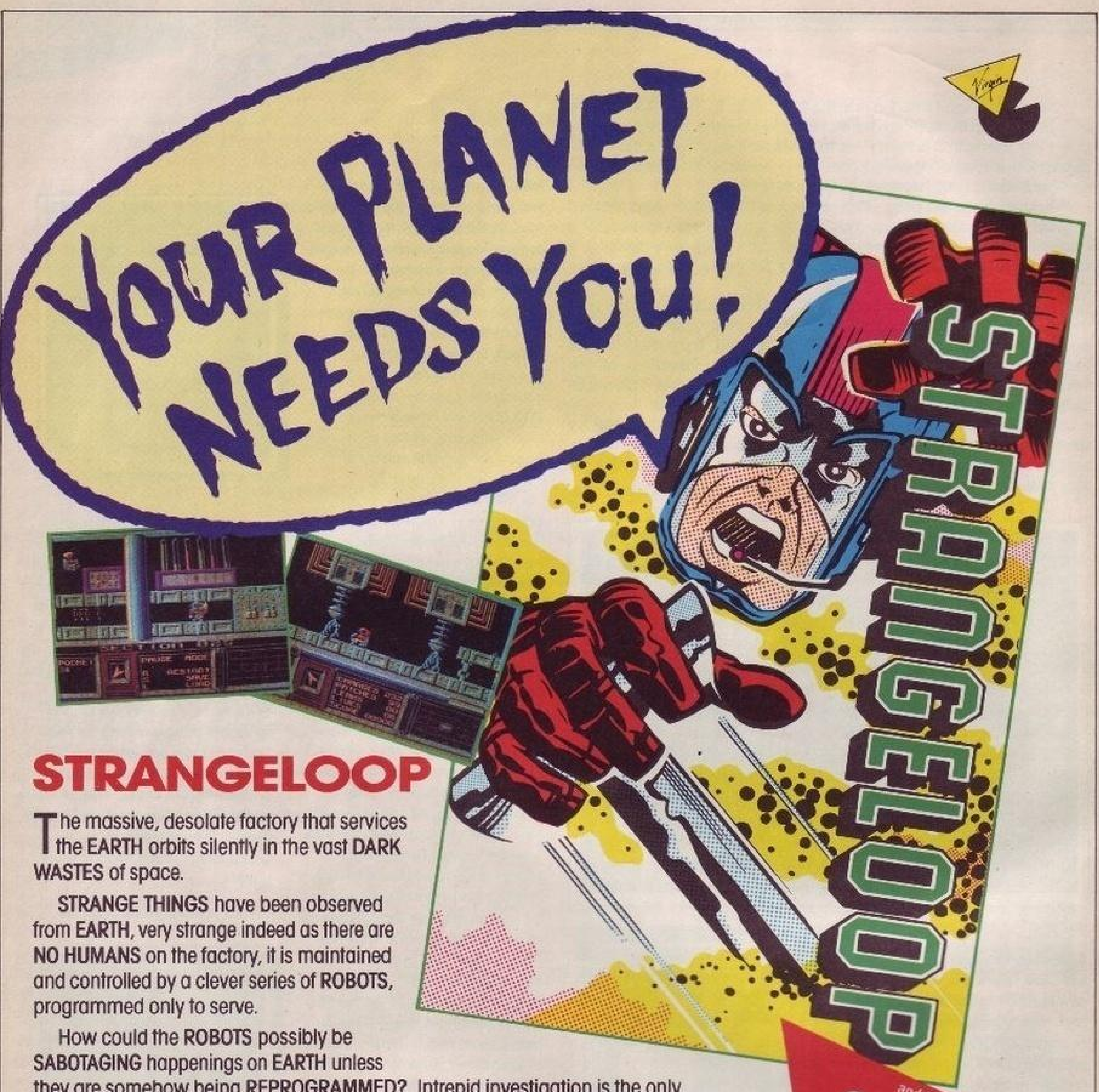
He's held in exceptionally high regard by Robert White and the rest of the Durell team. Robert White says of him: 'I could tell him to write a program about jellyfish and it would be really good'.

The Amstrad version of *Turbo Esprit* is in the hands of Nick Wilson. He may only be 17, but he's been programming for four years, the last one and a half of them at Durell. He's written a platform game called *Mineshaft* on the BBC and converted *Combat Lynx* to the same machine. Obviously a young man of many talents.

Nick Wilson – slaving away to get you Turbo Esprit

The view through from the controls





STRANGELOOP

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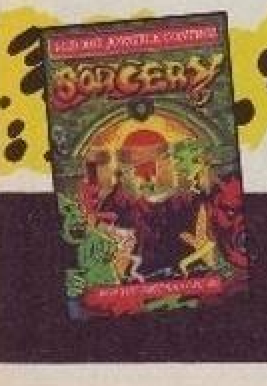
This what they were saying about **STRANGELOOP** before they even saw this version

"Strangeloop is unique, graphically impressive, vast, and devious; in short, brill..." **Personal Computing Weekly**

"...you've got to use your brain as well as your joystick...Strangeloop graphics are superb...a real Screen Star if ever I saw one" **Commodore User**

"This is a very big and superior arcade adventure...an elegantly designed game" **Your Commodore.**



Remember "SORCERY", this year's most ACCLAIMED title for the AMSTRAD? Well VIRGIN GAMES' unrivalled reputation for AMSTRAD software is upheld again with the Gang of Five's latest MASTERPIECE.

Fasten your safety belts – it's going to be a bumpy ride. This is a driving game *par excellence*, from the man who brought you the outstanding *Combat Lynx* – Mike Richardson. In his new program he doesn't just give you the chance to drive around like crazy and shoot people. No, he also gives you the chance to do some good by ridding the world of some very evil people – international drug traffickers.

Seated in your Lotus Turbo Esprit you drive through a city in pursuit of the smugglers. Buildings loom up on every side. Traffic lights halt your progress – unless you want to flatten a few of those pedestrians crossing the road. Watch out for them again at the zebra crossings, or you'll lose even more points. Roads change from two lanes to six in the twinkling of an eye.

Before you know what's happened you could find yourself being pursued by the very people you were pursuing a moment ago. But don't worry – all you have to do is accelerate like a lunatic, turn a couple of 90 degree corners around the block and come up on their tail before fixing them in your cross hairs and giving them a dose of instant law enforcement.

The individual delivery cars are backed up by hit squads posing an additional threat. Your ultimate aim is to get the armoured van the cars are delivering to. But there's a lot of driving, shooting and mapping to do before you'll get that far.

The Inside Story

Now get this right: it's pronounced Dew-Rell, with the accent on the second syllable. You'd better get it right because, because mispronunciation of the name, says Robert White, is 'the one thing that makes me hysterically traumatised.'

Durell is the name of the company because it is Robert White's middle name and because it seemed more suitable than the only other alternative he had – Wobblesoft. After spending a few hours in the Taunton offices of the company you might wonder whether Wobblesoft wouldn't more accurately describe the slightly manic atmosphere that prevails.

It's the sort of place where the bank manager rings up – as he did during my visit – to ask if they've got any good games for his new Amstrad 6128. It's the sort of place where it hardly seems unusual that Robert White began as an art student, trained as a teacher, changed to Quantity Surveying and ended up designing hospitals on computer before starting his own software house with an Oric and a few programs he'd now rather forget.

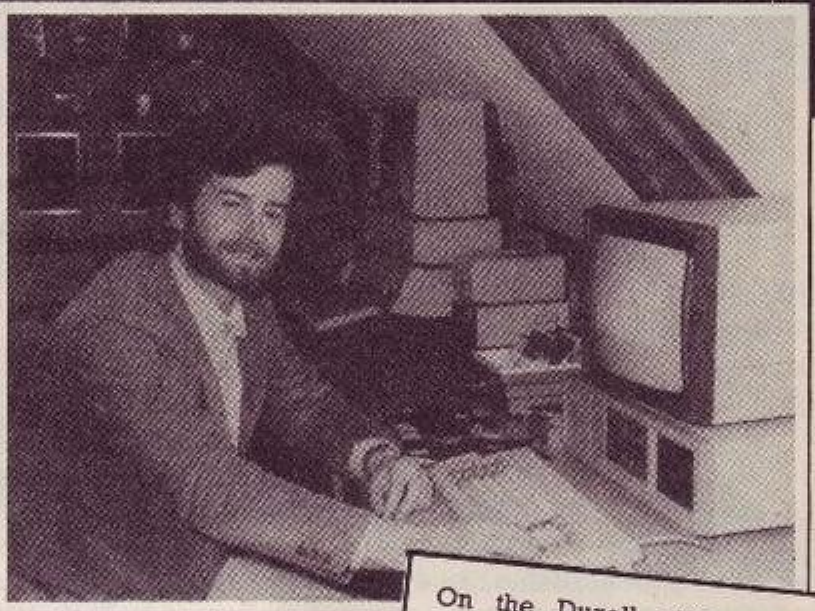
It was in 1983 that Robert's ad in the Somerset County Gazette attracted the attention of Mike Richardson, who promptly wrote *Jungle Troubles* and *Harrier Attack* – the programs that started Durell on the road to success.

Now there are 9 full-time programmers employed at Durell, plus another three freelances who can be called on when the need arises. The launch of the three games previewed here should make them one of the most important software houses around in 1986.

Team photo in one of Taunton's many beauty spots

Business Insight

Robert White holds some pretty forthright views on the state of the software industry and its future. Here are the censored highlights.



Robert White – the founder of Durell, still going strong at 32

On the Durell philosophy of games: 'We believe in games that are slightly realistic – but *not* simulations – with high-quality graphics and a lot of fun to play. At heart we're really arcade people.'

On the Amstrad: 'It's a beautiful machine. My own kids have one. Its Basic is better than the Apricot's. It's really good all round.'

On games as business: 'Certainly it's a money venture – but it's also got to be a creative venture.'

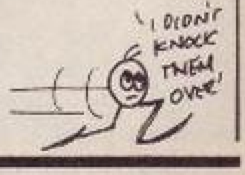
On 'Dumpers': 'Dumping is crucifying the market. Selling off rotten machines dirt cheap with no software support is terrible.'

On certain people in the software business: 'I call them the no-necks – because they're all cigar and no neck.'

On licensing and hype: We'd *never* do a licensing deal – you've got to do your own thing. At some point brand name will not be enough. You have to have quality.'

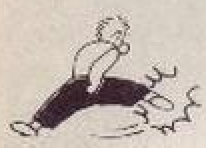
On the future of games: 'In two or three years video discs will have taken over – there won't be a games industry as we know it now.'

On possible Durell releases: '*Saboteur 2* is a distinct possibility. We'd also like to do a 3D car game – probably a rally. *Thunderbolt 2* is another possible. It could be a 3D *Scramble*-type game based on the American A10 anti-tank plane. *Genghis Khan*, with Mongols on horseback, pillage etc. is also on the cards.'


I DIDN'T KNOCK THEM OVER!

CHEAT MODE

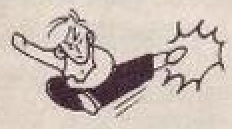
The section where your tips, pokes and devious game-busting ploys are relayed to the nation



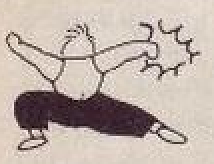
Yie Ar KUNG~FU

Last month's Mastergame had everybody chopping, kicking and jumping again – so here are a few tips on how to beat all eight opponents, courtesy of Daniel Riley and Emmet Masterson of Sidcup and our own BW.

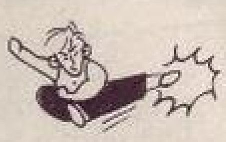
BUCHU: walk to the middle of the screen and when he jumps at you or approaches you on foot, roundhouse kick him. He will back off and then approach you again for the same treatment.



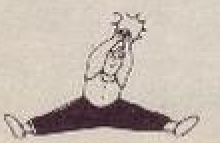
NUNCHA: wait for him to walk up to you then stride punch – but not too late. Repeat this until he's knocked out. Cornering him will again make your job easier.



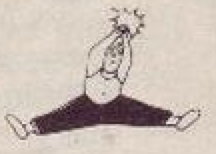
CLUB: easy to beat. Just flying kick or punch him every time he comes near you.



TONFUN: let him approach and then just keep hitting him with the flying punch.



STAR: jump over her star and force her into the corner of the screen. Then flying punch, flying kick or roundhouse kick her repeatedly while she is trapped.



POLE: this is a really tough competitor. When he approaches you hit him with a lunge punch. Beware his pole though since he can use it at close range as well as distance. More variance in moves may be required to stop him: try using the leg sweep at close quarters.

SWORD: this is another tough opponent. To beat him you'll need to leap in the air a lot so that he ends up standing directly beneath you each time you land. Here you should flying punch him and then set off into the air again.

BLUES: a fairly even fight this where you should just keep throwing all the good attacking moves at him and most times you'll come out on top.

Steve Davis Snooker

Here's another tip that more than one person has sent in. Wait until you've got an easy scoring shot, preferably on a colour. Play the shot and if succesful press SHIFT, ESC and R to return to the position before the shot and then play it again. Each time the break is increased and you'll easily knock old SD off his perch on the score table.

Hacker

The map and tips have been provided courtesy of Patrick McCorry from Belfast – but he still hasn't managed to complete the game. The security clearances may have been causing a few problems so here are the four codes. Remember that for the first one punctuation and spaces are important.

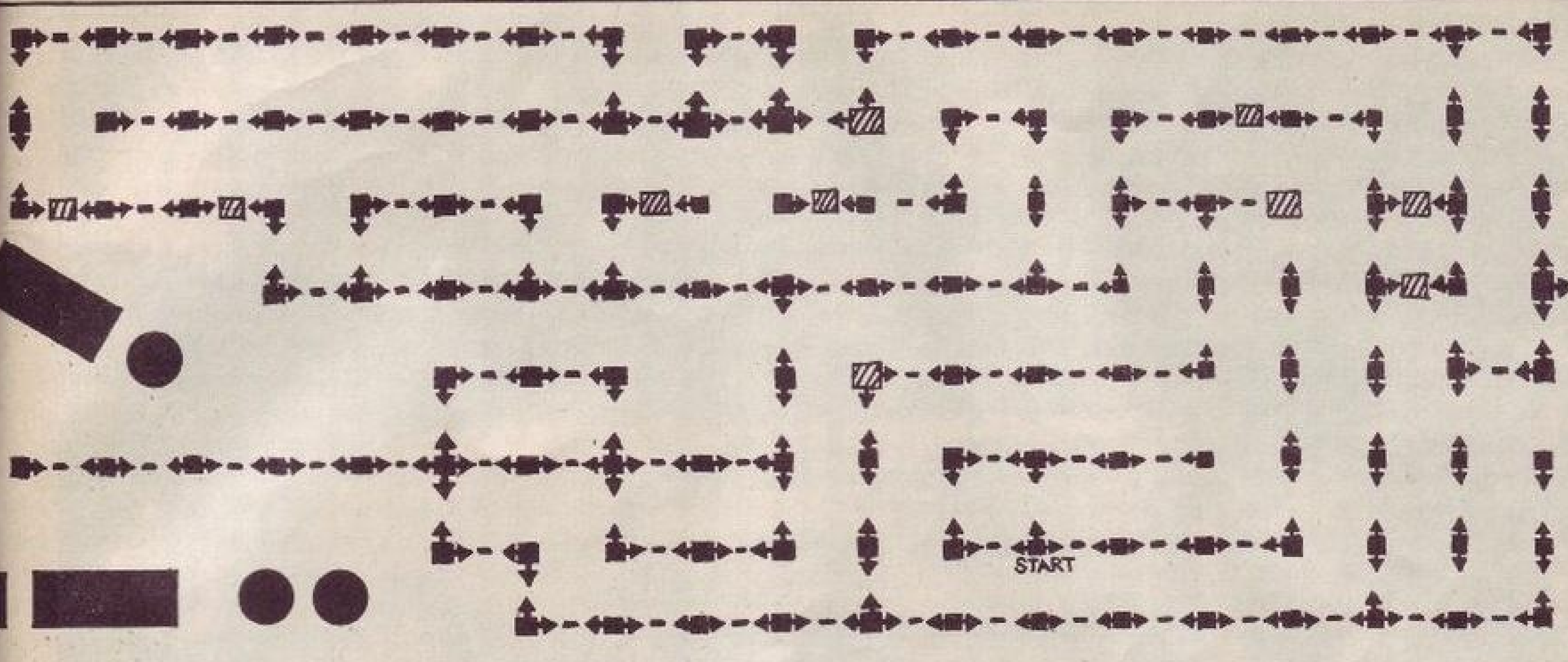
1. MAGMA, LTD.
2. AXD-0310479
3. HYDRAULIC
4. AUSTRALIA

Patrick's also sent the list of which spies sell which objects and a partially completed list of what each spy will accept.

Soul of a Robot

We had lots of maps and tips in for this great Mastertronic game. You saw our map last month, and now we've got some tips from Stewart Russell on how to stay alive and complete the game.

1. Have lots of psyche. By lots I mean 6-8,000. This can easily be achieved by getting the laser, going back to the starting screen, jumping on the robot blocks and sellotaping the space bar down while you eat/do your homework/fall asleep/mow the lawn. It should take about half an hour.
2. Fly over fungi! Don't jump because you often get thrown straight back at the nasty little saprophyte. (look it up)
3. If jumping is even mildly difficult – fly. The game has a habit of throwing empty screens at you so you can fall to your death.
4. You can drop twice as far by hovering. Just start flying and let yourself drop. Just before you are about to land hit enter to cancel your fatal momentum.
5. It's wiser to fly into unknown screens. By doing this you don't tend to bounce off walls, robots, etc and fall to your doom.
6. Go in shooting. There's only one kind of good robot – a good and dead one. Beware explosions though – you bounce off them too.



City	What they sell	What they want
Berne	Deeds to Swiss chalet, chronograph.	Cash.
London	Crown jewels, Beatles album.	Chronograph.
Athens	Greek urn, artifact.	Emerald scarab.
Cairo	Statue of Tut, emerald scarab.	Deeds to Swiss chalet, chronograph.
Delhi	Star of India, Spanish doubloons.	Emerald scarab.
New York	Uncut diamond, stocks and bonds.	Deeds to Swiss chalet.
San Francisco	49'rs season ticket, gold nuggets.	35mm camera, Beatles album.
Mexico City	Treasure map, Spanish doubloons.	Deeds to Swiss chalet.
Tokyo	String of pearls, 35mm camera.	Stocks and bonds.
Peking	Ming vase, jade carving.	Stocks and bonds, string of pearls.

▨ CITY
▬ LINK
➡ DIRECTION

Poke problems?

There are two basic methods for entering pokes: both of them are outlined below. They will be repeated each month and where an individual program differs from the two methods shown it will be described in detail. While on the subject, a number of people had trouble with the *Chuckie Egg* poke in issue three – that's because method 2 has to be followed rather than method 1.

Method 1: Type in the listing. Rewind the game tape. Type RUN followed by enter. Follow on-screen prompts to load the game.

Method 2: Here the tape header/loader/title screen has to be skipped. This usually is only the first one or two blocks of the program and is easily identifiable. To find it there are two distinct methods.

First of all you need to load an unknown filename, e.g. 'Rubbish', to identify where the main program starts. So you might type

LOAD "rubbish

and press enter. Now keep one eye on the screen and the other on the tape counter. The screen will now come up with a message, which on *Chuckie Egg*, for example, would be

Found CHUCKIE EGG Block 1

This is the loader. Let the tape run until the next message appears, in this case

Found CHUCK Block 1

although this will, of course, be different for other games. As soon as this is on screen stop the tape and rewind 2 or 3 numbers. Then reset the computer - but do NOT rewind the tape - type in the program and play the tape.

The alternative method involves crashing the program to show where the loader ends, and is more suitable for short pokes since it usually means typing the program twice.

First, type in the program and press RUN. Then follow the prompt on screen – this will almost always be 'Press PLAY' – to load the game. This will then crash, stopping the tape. DO NOT REWIND the tape. Type in the listing again and press play. This will load the poked game.

Everyone's a Wally

Here's a nice little poke that will give you unlimited endurance on Mikro-Gen's classic arcade adventure. It's entered using poke method 1.

```
10 MEMORY &1FFF: LOAD""
20 FOR N = 8557 TO 8564: READ
A: POKE N,A: NEXT
30 POKE 8239,109: POKE 8240,2:
POKE 8203,117
40 CALL &2000
50 DATA
62,182,50,225,129,195,0,3
```

Galactic Plague

If you're having trouble with any of the screens then several people have pointed out a handy cheat that can be used on any screen to take you to the next. Just pressing the letter "R" does the trick – and gives you a bonus making massive scores possible.

Pyjamarama

If you've been having trouble getting 100% on *Pyjamarama* even though you've solved it, then make sure all the objects have been moved from their starting places before setting off the alarm. Advice from **Roderick Dunlop** of Pollokshields.

Anybody having trouble with the computer opponent will be pleased to receive these tips from **Chris Woolley** of Weston-Super-Mare.

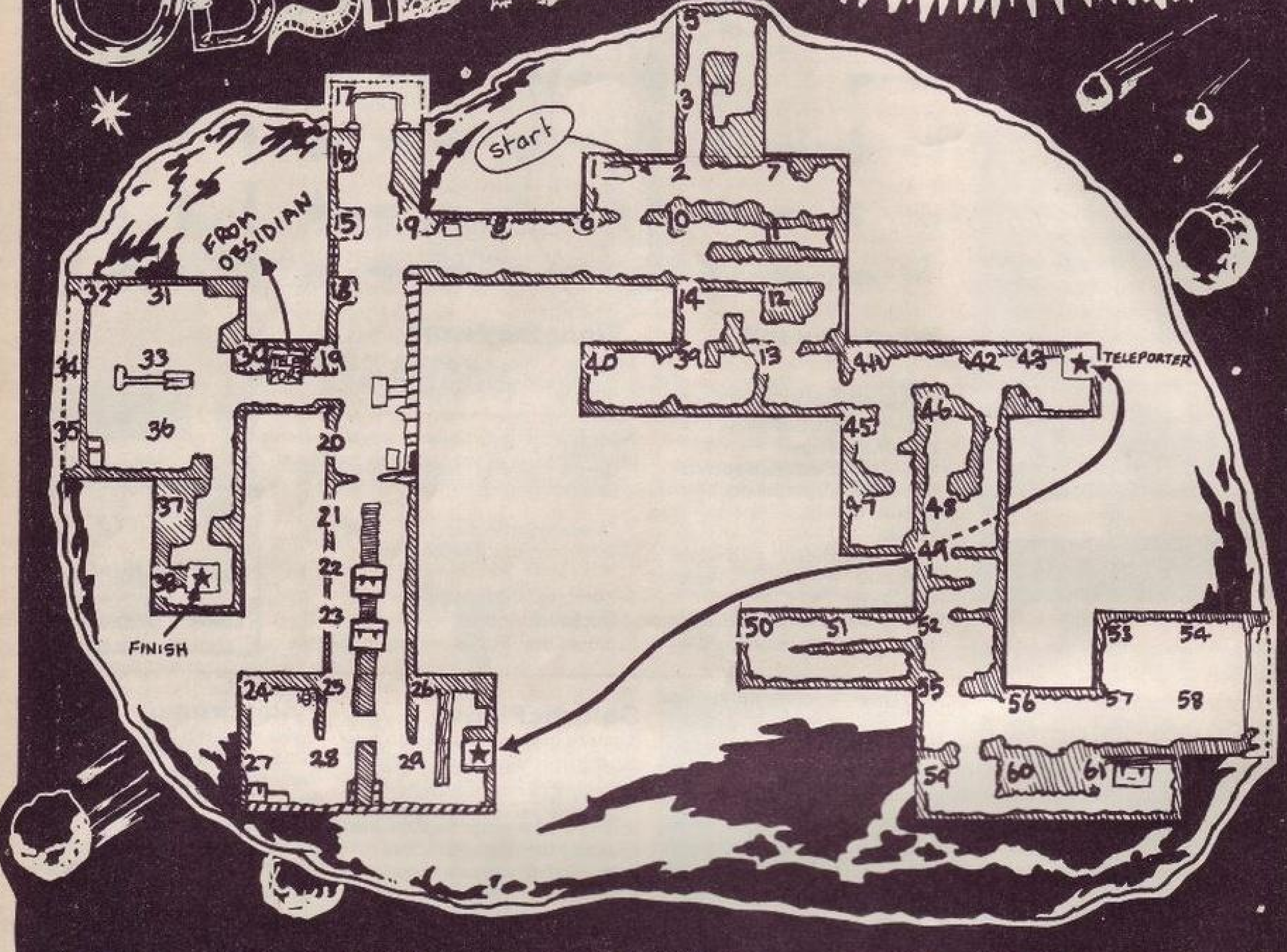
To complete each game quickly don't bother trying to find the objects – just search for the airport door (remember to make sure you have altered the options before starting the game). Once you've found the door block yourself in with water buckets or a gun and string. When your opponent has all the objects he will go to the airport where he should be killed by your traps. Go into the room where he died, collect the objects and exit to the airport.

When in hand to hand combat keep your finger on the fire button and waggle the joystick up and down. You will automatically face your opponent as he moves around the room and as soon as he comes in range... bang, crash wallop! The unlucky spy won't be able to hit you and will eventually be killed.

This method can also be used right at the start of the game and as soon as you stop laughing at the spy's demise set a time bomb and exit. When your opponent reappears – bang!. If you want some fun re-enter the room straight after the explosion and set another time bomb. Hee hee!! Cruel, isn't it?

OBSIDIAN

To help you out even more with the *Obsidian* map, here's a list of objects and where you can find them.



OBJECT	ROOMS	OBJECT	ROOMS	OBJECT	ROOMS	OBJECT	ROOMS
Energy key	5	Security pass	45 and 59	Blue glass	39	Ice crystal	17
Lazer pass	7	Silicon crystal	31	Triliam crystal	53	Turbine disc	24
Lock decoder	3	De-vapouriser	32	Teleport disc	47	Star map	61
Bottle of acid	14	Fusion key	46	Red crystal	26	Suicide bomb	51
Sonic key	13 and 41						

Lords of Midnight

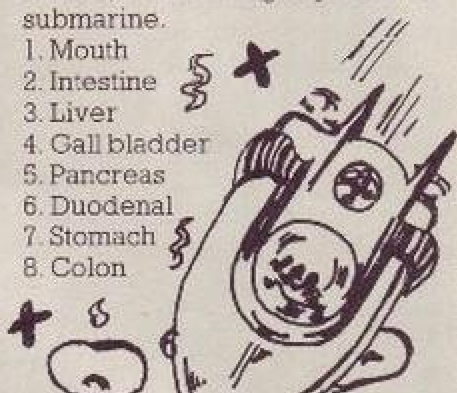
More tips have been received for the epic game, this time from **Andrew Bowden** in Loughborough. His advice is to gather all the major lords together at the Citadel of Xajorkith, including those from the north-east of Midnight, and defend this against the Doomdark hordes.

Morkin should recruit Farflame the Dragonlord and remain in the north just in case. Once Doomdark's roving forces have attacked Xajorkith and been beaten so that few of them remain in the land, move north west to Ushgarak to take the Citadel. If this fails Morkin may still be able to complete his task.

Fantastic Voyage

Jason "The Black Spot" Martin from Hornchurch has sent in the locations of the eight pieces of submarine.

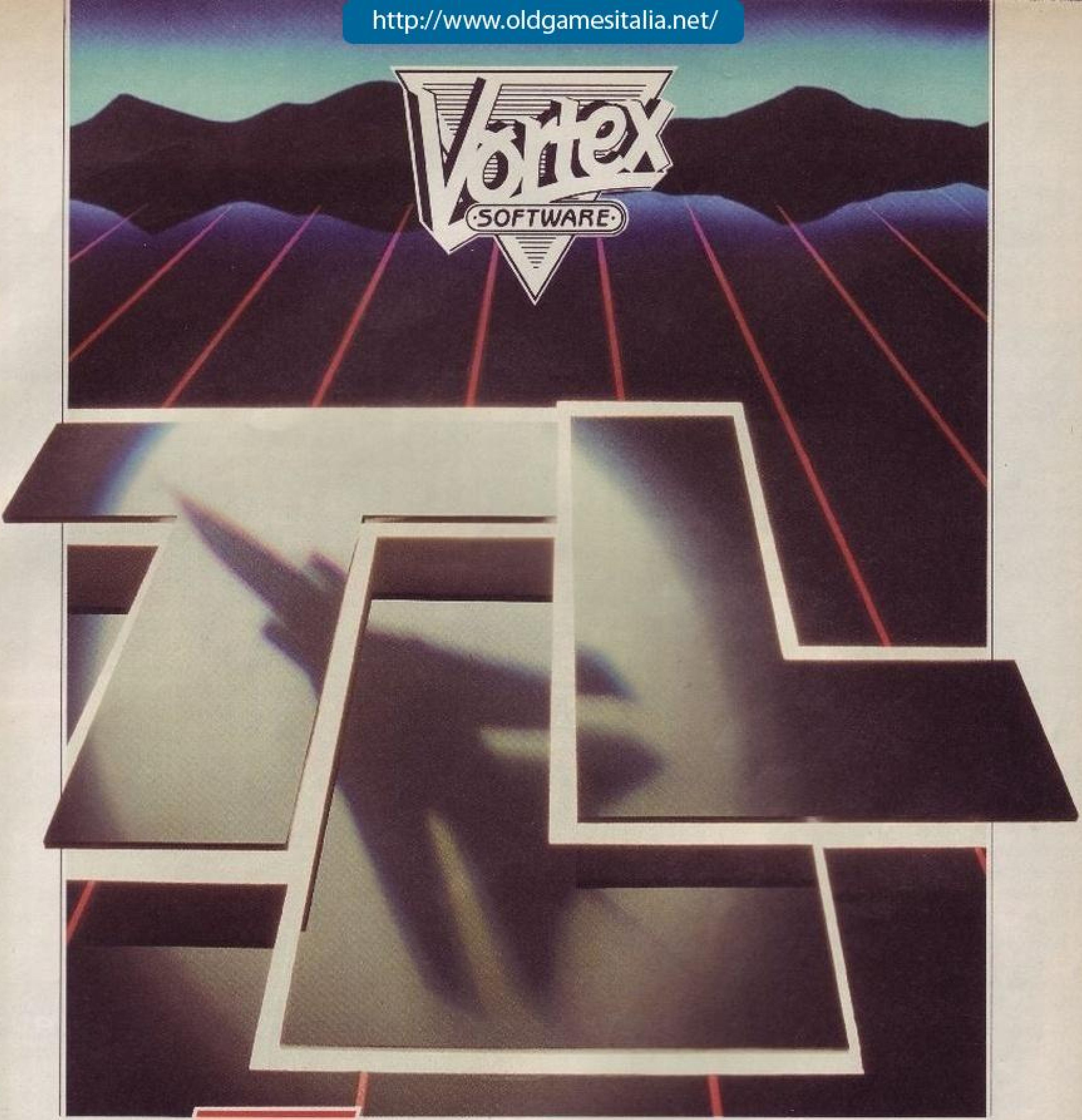
1. Mouth
2. Intestine
3. Liver
4. Gall bladder
5. Pancreas
6. Duodenal
7. Stomach
8. Colon



Marsport

Astonishingly, we've already received the first solution to this brain- busting game from Gargoyle - **John McCann** from Lisburn is the hard working genius who solved it. He reckons it was easier than *Dun Darach* but his solution covered five sheets of A4 paper, not including the map. So here are the ingredients for some factored objects.

1. Gauze and charcoal make a gas mask.
2. Water, flour and baketin make a cake.
3. Frame, sun chart and glass make an eyeshield.
4. Toppee and helmet make artifact.
5. Artifact and gun make a hyper gun.
6. Lute and dais make a lead suit.
7. Oxygen and empty tank make an air tank.
8. Syringe, insect, pointe and tea make antidote.



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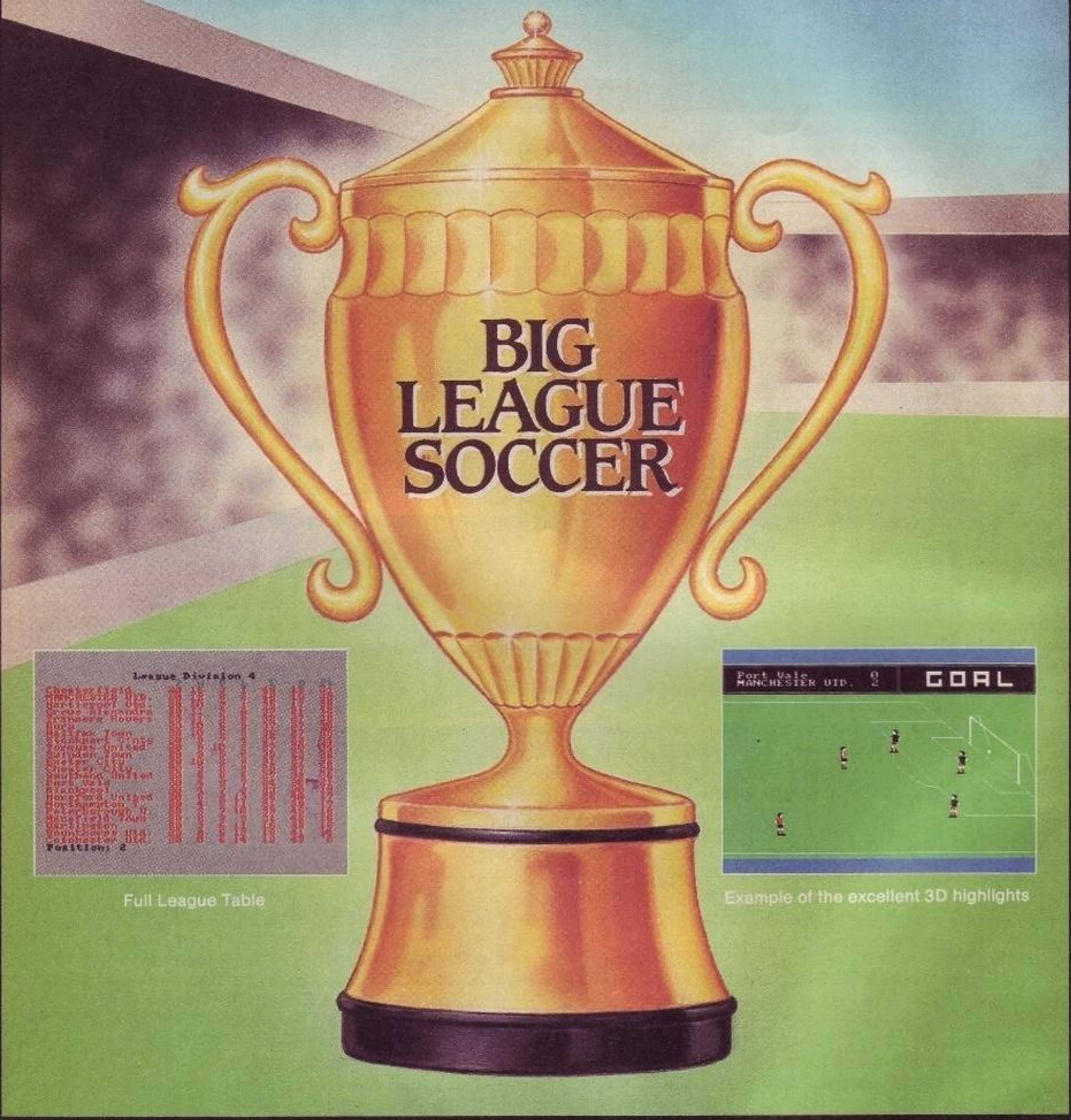
BIG
LEAGUE
SOCCER
League Division 4
Position: 2
Port Vale 0
MANCHESTER UTD. 2
GOAL

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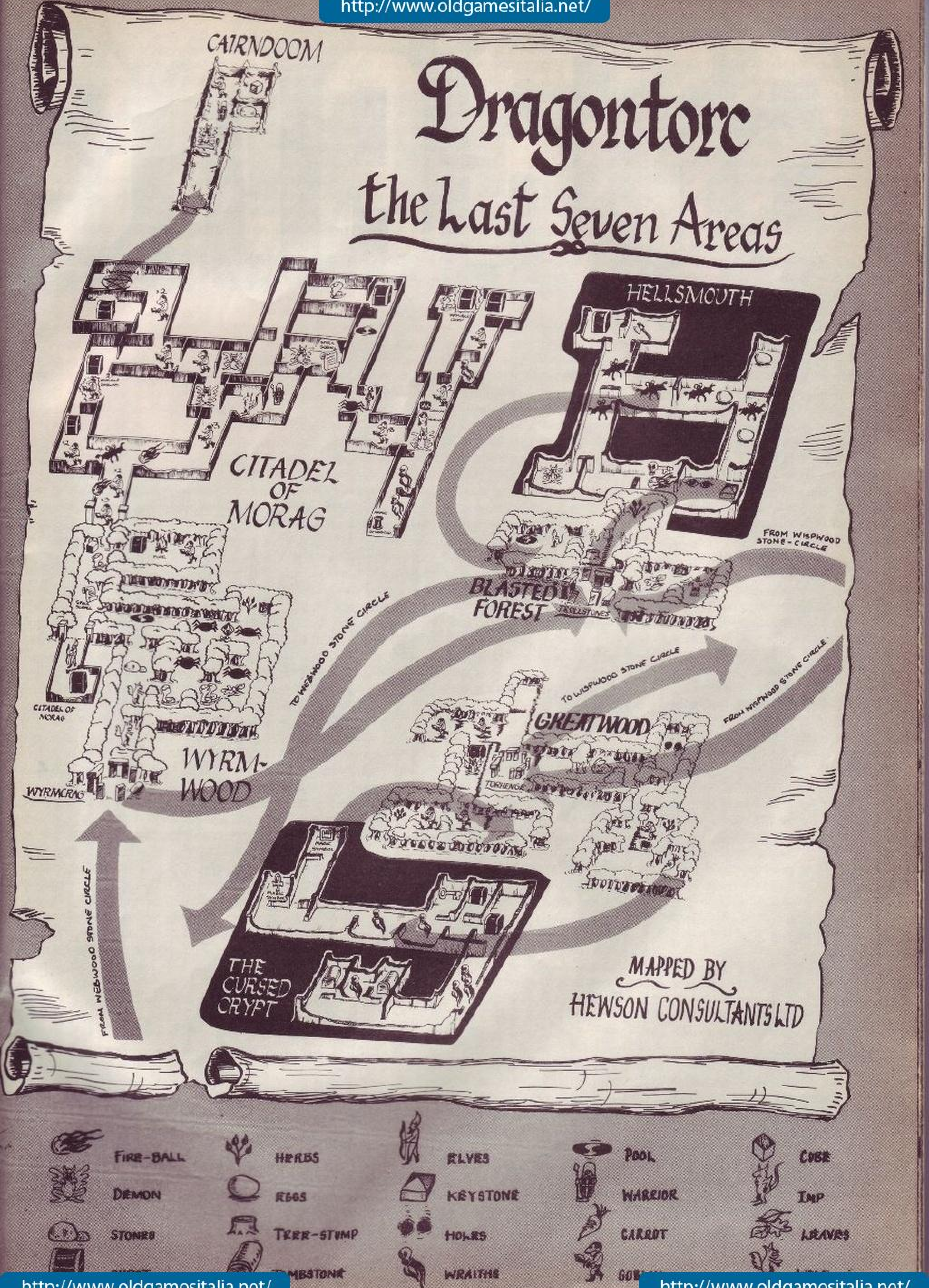
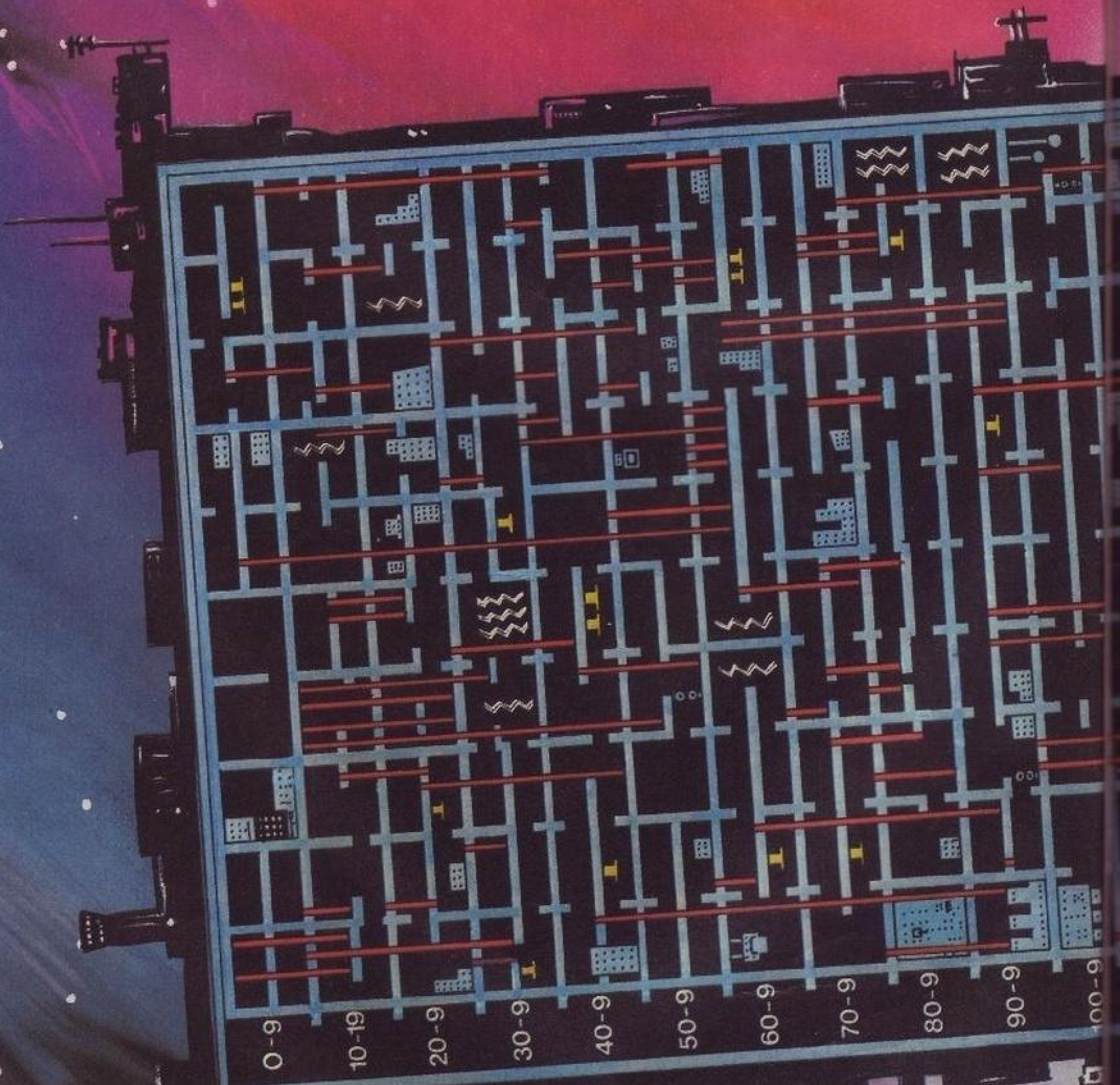

CAIRNDOOM
HELLSMOUTH
CITADEL OF MORAG
FROM WISPWOOD STONE-CIRCLE
BLASTED FOREST
TELLSTONES
TO WEBWOOD STONE CIRCLE
CITADEL OF MORAG
WYRMCRAG
WYRM-WOOD
TO WISPWOOD STONE CIRCLE
GREATWOOD
TORHENGE
FROM WISPWOOD STONE CIRCLE
FROM WEBWOOD STONE CIRCLE
THE CURSED CRYPT
FIRE-BALL
HERBS
ELVES
POOL
CUBE
DEMON
EGGS
KEYSTONE
WARRIOR
IMP
STONES
TREE-STUMP
HOLES
CARROT
LEAVES
MBSTONE
WRAITHS
GOB

MAPPED BY
HEWSON CONSULTANTS LTD

STRANG

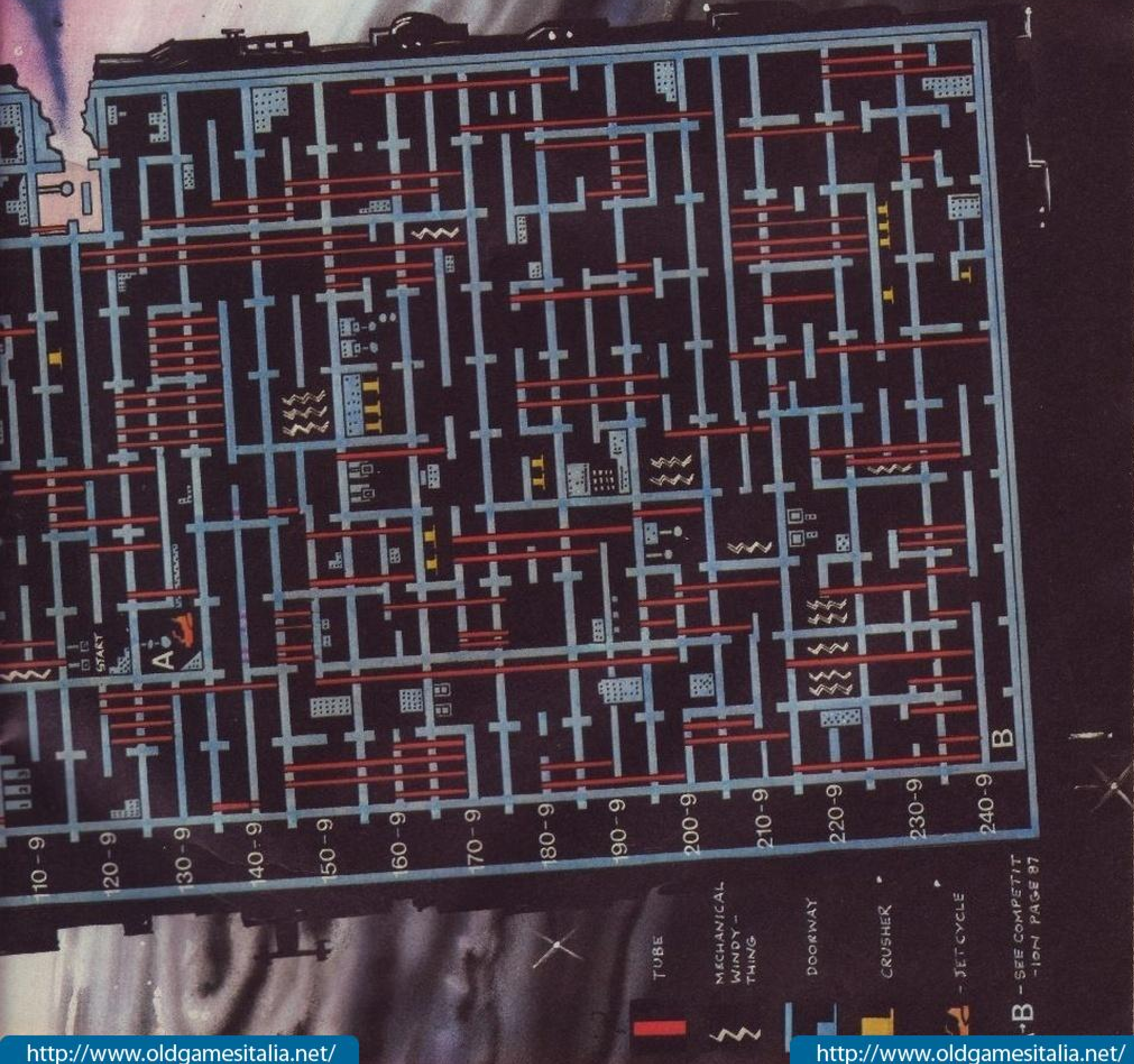

0-9
10-19
20-9
30-9
40-9
50-9
60-9
70-9
80-9
90-9
100-9

mapped by Ian Bofflin

ELOOP

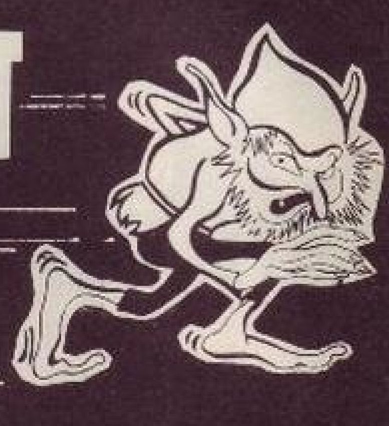
AN AMSTRAD ACTION MEGA-MAP

Trev


START
A
B
110-9
120-9
130-9
140-9
150-9
160-9
170-9
180-9
190-9
200-9
210-9
220-9
230-9
240-9
TUBE
MECHANICAL WINDY-THING
DOORWAY
CRUSHER
- JETCYCLE
A-B - SEE COMPETIT-ION PAGE 87

COMPETITION

The GREMLIN grab-factor



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Gremlin Graphics
Amstrad
Gremlin Graphics

25 pairs of *Monty on the Run* and *Profanation* have just got to go in this gorgeous Gremlin competition

Gremlin's star mole Monty has at last made it on to the Amstrad. It's not surprising he's been a while because the cops are on his tail. Monty – as the title says – is on the run. He's gone over the wall. He's AWOL. Scarpered. Done a runner.

In the process he's come up with a platform game featuring lovely music and pretty graphics. You can capture a copy by answering the questions below.

Profanation is set in the mystic land of Egypt. You play explorer Johnny Jones, who has to solve the secrets of the tomb and lift the curse hanging over it. Thrills and chills can be yours – if you only answer correctly the questions below.

1. What is the name of the famous prison on an island off the coast of California?
a. Dartmoor
b. Alcatraz
c. Hayling Island

2. Whose tomb was discovered in Egypt by Lord Caernarvon?
a. Rameses
b. Cleopatra
c. Tutankhamun

3. Who did *Porridge*?
a. Ronnie Corbett
b. Ronnie Barker
c. Ronnie Reagan

4. Cleopatra killed herself with
a. an asp
b. a razor blade
c. a cobra

Competition Entries

Entries must be on a postcard or the back of an envelope only and clearly marked either *Gremlin* or *Strangeloop*. If you want to enter both then you must send separate entries. The closing date for both these competitions is February 14th.

Send entries to: **Amstrad Action, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS**

STRANGELOOP

shocker!

50 copies of Virgin's ace arcade adventure are up for grabs. Plus 3 copies of the mega-board game *Hype* – worth £22.95!

We made it a Rave last month – now you get the chance to win a copy of the fab game *Strangeloop*. 250 rooms of puzzling action should keep you busy for a long while as you try to get rid of the robots and shut down that run-away space factory.

50 winners will receive copies of the game. An even luckier three people will also get copies of Virgin's board game *Hype*, in which you have to guide a rock band to the top of the slippery pole. Money and fame are the aims in this engrossing game.

What you have to do

Consult the amazing mega-map of *Strangeloop* in the Cheat Mode pages. Then work out what the quickest route is from Room A to Room B. then write down the number of doors you have to pass through on a postcard or the back of a letter and send it to us. Easy? Decide that when you've had a look at the map.

The high score file keeps getting longer and longer and it's good to see some of the hot new games making their presence felt. *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* has been keeping lots of people busy with some amazing scores which obviously took many hours to get. Other new games are also attracting interest but here's a hit list of games on which we're particularly keen to get scores: *Bruce Lee, Fighting Warrior, 3D Grand Prix, Gyroscope, Highway Encounter, Nightshade, TLL, Wriggler (Blaby)* and *Impossible Mission*. They're all very hot and deserve plenty of attention, so get cracking and remove Bob "I only put the scores in to encourage them" Wade from the tables.

There's still a disturbing lack of response to challenges. Those who have been accused seem very reluctant to defend themselves, but then with such observant and skilful readers I'm not surprised. Keep those challenges coming – the innocent must be protected.

Ahhh!
12,320 Flemming Pedersen, Denmark.

Air Traffic Control
76% K Clarke, Telford.
70% Andrew Feeley, Whitefield.

Alien Break-In
337,400 Iain McKinnon, Glasgow.

Android One
17,680 David Litherland, Bolton.

Battle Beyond the Stars
7,425 Flemming Pedersen, Denmark.

Beach Head
122,100 Jeremy Nargi, Hove.
122,000 Neil Cruickshank, Inverness.
120,000 Lawrence Smith, Newport.

Boulderdash
28,875 Stewart Hackley, Poynton.
24,154 Simon Cuddeford, Kenilworth.
23,840 Paul Gill, Cheadle

Brian Jacks Superstar Challenge
3,636 George Reaves, Bradford.
3,521 David Millar, Johnstone.
3,481 Robert MacCallum, Edinburgh.

Bruce Lee
192,175 Peter Ross, Motherwell.
85,100 N.Hadi, Bristol

Chiller
8,700 Ian Grainger, Wingate.
7,200 Justin Leahy, Eltham.
6,500 Iain McKinnon, Glasgow.

Chimera
875 Jeremy Nargi, Hove.

Chuckie Egg
269,400 Mark Wagner, Pinner.
267,780 Richard Denton, Torquay.
256,430 Gary Callan, Exeter.

Codename Mat 1
1,106 George Reaves, Bradford.
1,090 Eric Henry, Drogheda.
1,050 Samantha Bell, Maidenhead.

Codename Mat II
23,960 Christopher Hardy, Weymouth.

Combat Lynx
176,850 Alan Stenson, Catterick Garrison.
136,760 William Jenkins, Cramlington.
89,300 Stewart Hackley, Poynton.

Confuzion
143,000 Duncan Ellis, Ilkley.
73,715 Susan Morton, Garforth.
73,035 Mark Edmonds, Leigh-on-Sea.

Daley Thompson's Decathlon (One day)
130,360 Steven Dunn, Cookham.
110,580 Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh.
109,720 Peter Glasgow, Livingston.

Dark Star
130,000 Graeme Taylor, East Kilbride.
126,520 Donald Sharkey, Scunthorpe.
123,400 Ian Boffin, Woking.

Defend or Die
2,099,250 P.A Hyett, Cheltenham.
1,672,350 Ian Boffin, Woking.
832,650 Paul Edwards, Stevenage.

Devil's Crown
543,780 Jeremy Nargi, Hove.
38,730 MA Clayton, Blackpool.

Er*Bert
126,850 Richard Denton, Torquay.
111,000 Lawrence Smith, Newport.
32,500 Peter Glasgow, Livingston.

Everyone's a Wally
1,570 Antony Critchley, Bracknell.
1,570 Paul Carruthers, Lytham.
1,550 Mark Pinner, Bedford.

Fighting Warrior
74,620 Michael Clark, Midlothian.
62,600 Stuart Bruce, Cleator.
54,230 Christopher Hardy, Weymouth.

Frank Bruno's Boxing
29,980 Rajpal Singh, West Glasgow.
29,720 Matthew Burbedge, Sittingbourne.
29,590 Andrew Douglas, Carlisle.

Fruit Machine
£29.50 Richard Kiddle, Wisbech.
£29.40 Joseph Dittman, Wigan.
£22.00 Harvey Case, Orpington.

Fruity Frank
16,075 Gary John Shanks, Livingston.
15,600 N Miller, Tonbridge.
10,380 Alastair Kerr, Plymouth.

Galactic Plague
100,610 Joanne Kingdon, Yeovil.
50,190 Craig Rickaby, Newton Aycliffe.
44,190 L Walker, Liverpool.

Gauntlet
11,490 Paul Hyett, Cheltenham.

Ghouls
7,090 Paul Stagg, Rickmansworth.
5,030 Jason Grandin, Cardiff.
1,642 Stewart McIntyre, Bishopbriggs.

Gilligan's Gold
412,000 Michael Clark, Midlothian.
318,179 C Johnson, Sutton Coldfield.
285,905 Andrew Clarke, Hillingdon.

3D Grand Prix
8,750 Christopher Hardy, Weymouth.
8,330 Jeremy Nargi, Hove.
7,322 Keith Millward, Chinnor.

Grand Prix Rally II
54,474 Geoff Kerslake, Woodham Ferrers.
52,355 MI Farrell, Ryde.
51,685 Paul Schofield, Leeds.

Gyroscope
6,170 Bob Wade, Somerton.

Harrier Attack
452,000 Mark Powell, Northwich.
446,880 Richard Denton, Torquay.
375,650 Ian Grainger, Wingate.

Haunted Hedges
299,470 C Johnson, Sutton Coldfield.
31,480 Daniel Maharry, Margate.

Highway Encounter
76,120 Ian Boffin, Woking.
42,650 Gordon Hay, Glasgow.
40,840 Andrew Cloke, Hillingdon.

Hunchback
1,506,000 Michael Clark, Midlothian.
1,000,000 Kevin McKeown Jnr, Armadale.
562,600 Paul Gill, Cheadle.

Hunchback II
9,000 Jason Carpenter.

Jet Boot Jack
86,925 Flemming Pedersen, Denmark.
25,000 Jeremy Nargi, Hove.

Jet Set Willy
175 items Daniel Hart, Loughton.
125 items Harpal Kooner, Birmingham.
96 items David Woodfield, Walsall.

Juggernaut
9,500 Michael Speers, Donaghadee.

Killer Gorilla
170,700 Guy Nussey, Stoke-on-Trent.
131,000 Ian Dunn, Cannock.
110,000 Huw Jones, Paisley.

Kong Strikes Back
535,600 C Johnson, Sutton Coldfield.
204,400 Richard Walker, Crewe.
188,100 Phillip Gower, Newport.

Laserwarp
159,980 Denis Condren, Filey.
97,420 Phillip Gower, Newport.
62,380 Christoper Winstanley, Preston.

Locomotion
721 Lawrence Smith, Newport.
192 Iain McKinnon, Glasgow.
165 Jeremy Nargi, Hove.

Manic Miner
250,112 Wayne Learoyd, Bramley.
94,989 Martin Luise, Solihull
92,804 Gordon Edgar, Buckie.

Minder
£19,229 Mark Tozer, Canvey Island.
£12,666 David Gibbon, Bearpark.
£8,950 Paul Sutcliffe, Shaftesbury.

Mutant Monty
44,950 A Wagstaffe, Whitchurch
43,180 Alastair Kerr, Plymouth.

Hi SCORE

Nightshade
534,000 Bob Wade; Somerton.

On the Run
74,110 Daniel Singerman. Southampton.
74,060 Patrick McCorry, Belfast.
60,000 Ranjit Singh, Queen's Park.

Pinball Wizard
18,325 Flemming Pedersen, Denmark.

Punchy
70,130 Richard Denton, Torquay.
59,490 Stewart Hackley, Poynton.

Raid
540,450 Gerry Hughes, Cranleigh.
374,900 Jeremy Nargi, Hove.
361,650 Christopher Hardy. Weymouth.

Red Arrows
65,416 S.Glendenning, Darlington.
62,400 Stewart Hackley. Poynton.

Rock Raid
32,780 Stephen Gray, Bath.

Roland goes Digging
£1,710.38 Adrian Johnston. Shrewsbury.
£306.00 Gary Pearce, Hemmel Hempstead.
£264.80 Jonathan Williams. Sutton.

Roland in Time
153 crystals Andrew Marshall, London.
149 crystals Kenny Macaskill, Alloa.
143 crystals George Reaves, Bradford.

Roland on the Ropes
999,999 Adrian Johnston, Shrewsbury.
792,300 Jim Mitchell: Havant.
695,000 Kevin Westwood. New Malden.

Sabre Wulf
38,675 Matthew Chester, Louth.
38,200 Andrew Bowden. Loughborough.

The Scout Steps Out
650,000 Dean Covil., Merseyside.

Sir Lancelot
12,120 Andrew Preston, Stockport.
7,400 William Freeland, Dalkeith.

Sorcery
Lots of people over 97,000

Sorcery Plus
137,527 Paul Broadley, Glasgow.
135,458 David Tompkins, Warminster.
135,151 Andrew Michaels, Stepney.

Space Hawks
77,550 Mark Wagner, Pinner.
75,150 Stewart Hackley, Poynton.
74,850 Gary Callan. Exeter.

Spannerman
72,000 Julian Cater, East Sheen.
66,500 Donald Sharkey, Scunthorpe.
65,000 Stephen Gray, Bath.

Splat
22,535 David Cobane. Wythenshawe.

Star Avenger
16,220 David Rice. Glasgow.
14,895 Peter Clark, Glasgow.
11,230 Stuart Russell, Glasgow.

Star Commando
4,359,600 Daniel Ives, Luton.
4,265,300 Adam Samuels, Bury.
184,800 Ian Mathie, Dunstable.

Starion
32,911 Sean Brady, Eltham.
31,343 James Broadhurst, Amtioch.
17,802 Adam Gardner, Enfield.

3D Starstrike
10,031,000 Joseph Farrington, Warrington.
4,950,000 Michael Clark, Midlothian.
3,450,000 Ian Boffin, Woking.

Steve Davis Snooker
112 break St.John Bird, Fakenham.
110 David Woodfield, Walsall.
65 break Paul Smith, Huddersfield.

Sultan's Maze
1,810 Clive James, Newport.
1,772 Richard Denton, Torquay.

Super Pipeline II
2,338,340 Joseph Dittman, Wigan.
1,228,055 Graham Ross, Devizes.
426,460 Matthew Burbedge, Sittingbourne.

Survivor
367,500 Paul Edwards, Stevenage.
241,100 Scott Brown, Cumbernauld.
227,400 Stephen Gray, Bath.

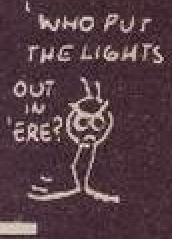
Tankbusters
18,300 Ian Boffin. Woking.
450 RG Messenger. Perth.

TLL
6,130 Bob Wade, Somerton.

The Way of the Exploding Fist
2,193,000 Matthew Lerrigo, London.
1,137,800 Adrian Leigh, Stockport.
968,700 Flemming Pedersen, Denmark.

Wizard's Lair
168,385 Adrian Leigh, Stockport.
152,000 Paul Lewis Northwich.
135,00 Richard Gordon, Forest Gate.

Yie Ar Kung-Fu
5,911,120 Ranjit Singh, London.
2,476,100 Andrew Douglas, Collisle.
2,389,940 Justin Leahy, Eltham.


'WHO PUT THE LIGHTS OUT IN 'ERE?

STUNNING SOFTWARE $AVINGS!

Wake up to Amstrad Action's unique mail order service

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- ▶ Economic
- ▶ Reliable

These pages are called Hot Stuff because they are HOT. They give you a way of getting your hands on sizzling software at sizzling discounts. Basically, you can use the form on p94 to order any Amstrad software you like, whether games or serious. And by collecting the vouchers printed in each issue of Amstrad Action you can obtain discounts of up to 20% – that's a massive saving of £3.00 on a £15.00 order!

The good news doesn't end there. Almost all orders qualify for a great, no-strings-attached FREE GIFT, ranging from blank cassettes to games worth £8. We know of no more exciting way of getting the programs you need.

How to use this table

The table allows you to calculate what discount you are entitled to if you enclose vouchers with your order. All you have to do is round up to the nearest pound the total (pre-discount) cost of the software you're buying. Find this figure on the top row of the table and then read down to see what discount you can claim for one, two, three and four vouchers.

EXAMPLE: Suppose you have ordered two games costing £8.95 each. The total pre-discount cost is £17.90. This rounds up to £18. This month you could only send in a single voucher, so reading down from the £18 figure in the top row you will see that you are entitled to a 90p discount. That'll just about buy you next month's slice of Amstrad Action.

TO ORDER, USE THE FORM ON PAGE 94

Savings table

Total cost of software pre-discount:	£2.00	£3.00	£4.00	£5.00	£6.00	£7.00	£8.00	£9.00	£10.00	£11.00	£12.00	£13.00	£14.00	£15.00	£16.00	£17.00	£18.00	£19.00	£20.00
One voucher	£0.10	£0.15	£0.20	£0.25	£0.30	£0.35	£0.40	£0.45	£0.50	£0.55	£0.60	£0.65	£0.70	£0.75	£0.80	£0.85	£0.90	£0.95	£1.00
Two vouchers	£0.20	£0.30	£0.40	£0.50	£0.60	£0.70	£0.80	£0.90	£1.00	£1.10	£1.20	£1.30	£1.40	£1.50	£1.60	£1.70	£1.80	£1.90	£2.00
Three vouchers	£0.30	£0.45	£0.60	£0.75	£0.90	£1.05	£1.20	£1.35	£1.50	£1.65	£1.80	£1.95	£2.10	£2.25	£2.40	£2.55	£2.70	£2.85	£3.00
Four vouchers	£0.40	£0.60	£0.80	£1.00	£1.20	£1.40	£1.60	£1.80	£2.00	£2.20	£2.40	£2.60	£2.80	£3.00	£3.20	£3.40	£3.60	£3.80	£4.00

5%

VOUCHER

FREE!

with any order over £5

A C15 data cassette. These cassettes contain high-quality tape especially designed for use by computer owners. They come in library case with blank inlay card.

FREE!

with any order over £15

Your pick of one of the following games, each of which would normally cost £8.95! All are reviewed in AA issue 1.

ROLAND IN THE CAVES (Amsoft)
FLIGHTPATH 737 (Anirog)
ROLAND ON THE ROPES (Amsoft)
SPANNERMAN (Amsoft)
ROLAND GOES DIGGING

The rave way of buying raves

you're not sure quite what games you'd like you could do worse than make a selection from this list – it's made up of programs given an AA Rave review in this or previous issues of Amstrad Action. Remember that by sending in vouchers you can obtain considerable savings on the listed prices.

YIE AR KUNG FU
Hilarious combat action. £8.95 cass
MARSPORT
Massive arcade adventure. £9.95 cass
BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK
Oh-so-addictive platforming. £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk.
CAULDRON
Beautiful graphics, bewitching game. £8.99 cass.
SPY VS SPY
Wacky cartoon capers. £9.95 cass.
BATTLE OF BRITAIN
Classy wargame. £9.95 cass.
DYNAMITE DAN
Leap, dodge, enjoy. £8.95 cass.
3D GRAND PRIX
Tire-burning graphics! £9.95 cass £13.95 disk.
HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER
Fast-moving 3D terror. £8.95 cass
BRUCE LEE
Leaping and fighting. £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk
RAID
Bombing the Commies. £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk
MATCHDAY
Skilful soccer play. £8.95 cass
DRAGONTORC
A-maze-ing and huge. £7.95 cass
BOULDER DASH
You can't stop playing. £9.95 cass
LORDS OF MIDNIGHT
Great adventure epic. £8.95 cass £12.95 disk
CYRUS 2 CHESS
Looks superb, plays tough. £9.95 cass £13.95 disk
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Smash-hit combat. £9.95 cass
NIGHTSHADE
Dazzling graphics from Ultimate. £9.95 cass
SWEEVO'S WORLD
Humourous, stylish, brain-teasing. £9.95 cass
TLL
Unbelievable scrolling. £8.95 cass
BARRY McGUIGAN'S BOXING
Best Amstrad boxing game. £9.95 cass

IMPORTANT

▶ If you send in more than one voucher they must be from DIFFERENT issues of the magazine. (Remember, each one has something different printed on the back!)

▶ We try to be as accurate as we can in giving details on price and disk-version availability. However we can't be held liable to any errors which may have crept in.

▶ If you want the disk version of a game you must mark this clearly on the order form, otherwise you'll get a cassette. Do check first that a disk version exists and that you have the right price for it.

Selecting serious software

If games aren't your scene, how about choosing one of these excellent programs (or any other serious software...)?

TASWORD 6128
word-processor for 6128 of the

HOW ORDERS ARE DEALT WITH

When the magazine was first launched, our mail order operation was dealt with by a separate company based in London. However this proved unsatisfactory, and we are now running it ourselves here in Somerton.

It's being taken care of by the super-efficient Sue Taylor from an office a couple of hundred yards away from the AA headquarters. Unless your order includes programs which our suppliers cannot get hold of for some reason, Sue will despatch all orders within three days of receiving them.

Even taking postal delays into account, you can therefore expect to receive your parcel within about 10 days of sending off your order. If it's delayed beyond that, chances are you've ordered a title which hasn't yet

Amstrad Action Readers' Charts

Some serious competition has been taking place at the top

[redacted]

SERIOUS SOFTWARE TOP 10

THE ALL-IN-ONE ACTION FORM

Fill in as much of the form as you wish (front and back). Then cut out the ENTIRE PAGE (even if you've only filled in parts of it) and post it to:

AA Forms, 18 Pinewood Drive
Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6JP

IMPORTANT
Don't forget to fill in this bit!

Name ____________________

Age ____________________

Address ____________________

____

Telephone number ____________________

WIN £25 OF SOFTWARE!!

By filling in this part of the form, you gain the chance to win £25 of software of your choice. THREE of these unspeakably exciting prizes are on offer. All you have to do is invent a couple of little phrases to run along the bottom of our pages next to the words AMSTRAD ACTION – something as idiotic, yet appropriate as those in this issue.

The winners' phrases will undoubtedly be used in future issues, as may other peoples. Anything to save us having to think of them!

PHRASE 1:

PHRASE 2:

High-score challenge

I hereby challenge the following high scores printed in Amstrad Action:

	GAME	SCORE
1.		
2.		

I think the score(s) impossible because:

High-score entry

I would like to register my high-scores in the following Amstrad games:

	GAME	SCORE	TIME TAKEN	
1.				
2.				
3.				

I promise these are genuine scores achieved without using cheat methods.
Signed

Game chart voting form

I would like to vote for the following game(s):

	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Total number of votes = 10

'NOT SITTING THERE AGAIN'

Serious software voting form

I would like to vote for the following piece(s) of 'serious software':

	PROGRAM	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

GRAPHICS ADVENTURE CREATOR

SPECIAL OFFER
save £3!

Anyone interested in adventures has got to be interested in the remarkable new program from Incentive which won such an enthusiastic review from The Pilgrim in January's Amstrad Action. The *Graphics Adventure Creator* allows you to create your own text and graphic adventures of considerable sophistication.

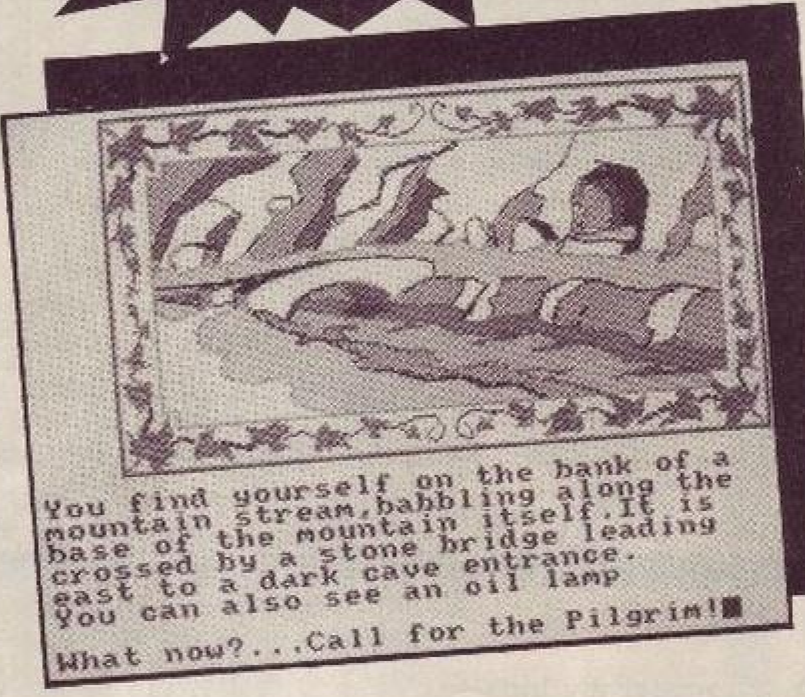
We're able to offer you both cassette and disk versions at considerably less than shop prices. The cassette version you can have for just £19.95 instead of £22.95. While on disk it will set you back just £23.95 (instead of £27.95).

To order just circle one of the options below and enclose a cheque made payable to Future Publishing.

PLEASE NOTE: This offer is quite separate to the rest of our mail order scheme. You cannot use our discount vouchers to obtain further reductions on these prices. And the offer does not qualify for a free game. You may of course order the program at full price in the mail order section of this page and claim a free game.

Please rush me the CASSETTE version of the Graphics Adventure Creator at only £19.95.

Please rush me the DISK version of the Graphics Adventure Creator at only £23.95.



```
You find yourself on the bank of a
mountain stream,babbling along the
base of the mountain itself.It is
crossed by a stone bridge leading
east to a dark cave entrance.
You can also see an oil lamp
What now?...Call for the Pilgrim!█
```

SPECIAL OFFER
save £3!

ELITE

If you've been wowed by our review of Firebird's amazing space epic *Elite* but can't quite manage the £14.95 asking price, here's an offer to blast you into hyperspace. We're selling the cassette version for just £11.95, a big enough saving to cover the cost of the next THREE copies of Amstrad Action! The sum INCLUDES post, packing and VAT.

Disk owners can do just as well. They can buy the game from us on disk for just £14.95 instead of £17.95.

To order simply circle one of the options below and enclose a cheque made payable to Future Publishing.

PLEASE NOTE: This offer is quite separate from the rest of our mail order scheme. You cannot use the vouchers to obtain a further discount on Elite, and the sum you enclose for it will not count towards any free gift.

Please rush me a copy of the CASSETTE version of Elite at only £11.95.

Please rush me a copy of the DISK version of *Elite at only £14.95.*

Mail Order Section

I would like the following titles:

Game **Software house** **Retail price**

1...

2...

3...

4...

Total cost pre-discount:....................

I enclose 0/1/2/3/4 vouchers and claim a discount (see Savings Table) of: £...

Amount payable (total cost minus discount):£...

If the amount payable is over £5.00 you may claim your FREE DATA-CASSETTE by placing a tick here:...

If the amount payable is over £15.00 you may claim your FREE GAME by circling one of the following:
Rol. in the Caves/Rol. on the Ropes/Flightpath 737/Rol. Goes Digging/Spannerman

If the amount payable is over £25.00 you may claim your FREE SUPER-GAME by circling one of the following:
Super Pipeline II/Jammin/Codename Mat/Splat!/Hunchback

IMPORTANT: Only ONE free gift per order is allowed.

I enclose a crossed cheque or postal order for the Amount Payable made out to Amstrad Action Mail Order. Please rush me the software.

ELITE

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AMSKEY ● Tape to tape backup utility (Must not be used to infringe copyright laws)

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Powerful CPM style utility with many features making easy work of disc file handling, including the unerasing of erased files. "No disc user should be without this utility" (Independent Amstrad review). FREE Disc deprotector, list protected programs, etc. **Disc £12.99**

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So powerful it will back up those long headerless programs. Offers a choice of saving speeds. A must for disc users who require fast loading of tapes that cannot be transferred to disc. **Tape £6.99**

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VISA

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LORD OF THE RINGS	15.95	11.95	MINI OFFICE	5.95	4.99
COMMANDO	9.95	7.50	SCRABBLE	9.95	7.50
MATCHDAY	9.95	7.50	BRUCE LEE	9.95	7.95
FRIDAY THE 13TH	8.95	6.75	LORDS OF MIDNIGHT	8.95	7.25
NIGHTSHADE	9.95	7.50	SORCERY + (DISK)	13.95	12.50
ROLLERCOASTER	8.95	6.75	FIGHTER PILOT DISK	12.95	11.95
KNIGHT RIDER	8.95	6.75	ROLAND IN SPACE DISK	12.95	11.95
RAMBO	8.95	6.75	BEACHHEAD (DISK)	13.95	12.50
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FIGHTING WARRIOR	8.95	6.75	INTERNATIONAL KARATE	6.50	4.99
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This year's Christmas spirit appears to have gone to our publisher's head. He's turned stark, raving bonkers. After disappearing into a tiny, blacked out room for two weeks' uninterrupted thought, he emerged with a subscription offer so ridiculous it took an hour and a half of questioning by two men in white coats to understand what he was saying.

Despite all our efforts to persuade him otherwise, he insists on going ahead, so it falls to my lot to inform you that anyone planning on taking out a subscription to this journal could be in for a very, very happy Christmas.

Here's how it works: you send us £15.50 (if you live in the UK) for a 12-month subscription and we send you not only your favourite (well, OUR favourite) computer magazine each month for a year, but also a very special Christmas gift of two of these amazing US Gold games.

The games are in fact worth £9.95 each, making a total saving of, I make it, £19.90 – as I was saying, quite insane.

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As you can see from the offer form, you don't quite have a free choice of any two games. They're divided into two groups of three, and you can't choose more than one program from group B – you must either take two from group A or one from each group. But since all six are pretty juicy, we don't think that's much of a limitation. Come on in and join Britain's friendliest Amstrad club.

Blurb Writer

Start of the US Gold rush

It probably hasn't escaped your notice that over the last 18 months US Gold has become Britain's most prolific software house, licensing all the best American software for distribution in the UK. But so far most of the titles it's released have only been available on other micros.

Now all that is changing. The six programs pictured on this page represent the start of a major push onto the Amstrad. All six titles have had massive sales on the Commodore 64, and US Gold has been employing the services of some of Britain's best Amstrad programmers to make the conversions to our machine. The three conversions we've seen at time of writing (*Beach-Head*, *Bruce Lee*, *Raid*) have all been extremely impressive – *Bruce Lee* and *Raid* were given AA Rave reviews in our November issue.

Suffice to say we could think of no more exciting range of games to help persuade you to subscribe to Amstrad Action.

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There's more than one reason, apart from the prospect of superb free software, for taking out a subscription to Amstrad Action.

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OR you can simply order any of the six games for a special subscribers' price of £6.95 each. To do this simply write down on a piece of paper your name, address, the subscriber's number printed on your address label (if you can find it!), and the games you want to order. Send it to: Subscribers' order, Amstrad Action, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS, together with a payment of £6.95 made out to Future Publishing for each game ordered.

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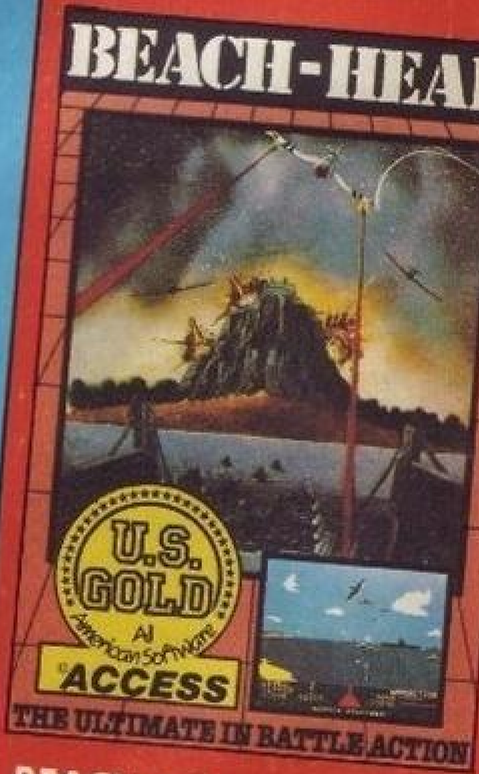
The rate for anywhere in Europe outside the UK and Eire is £25, payable by sterling cheque or international money order.

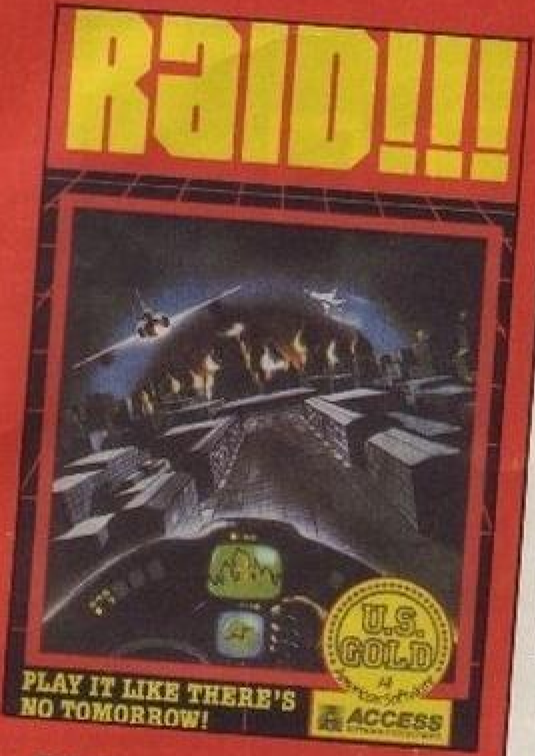
For Eire the rate is still £15.50, but this payment must be made in pounds sterling, not Irish currency.



BEACH-HEAD

This program caused a sensation when first released in the UK with its dramatic 3D depiction of naval warfare. You control a fleet of ships which you must guide through several very different battle stages before taking the fight onto land with a tank assault on the fortress of Kuhn-Lin.

Pick up TWO


RAID!!!
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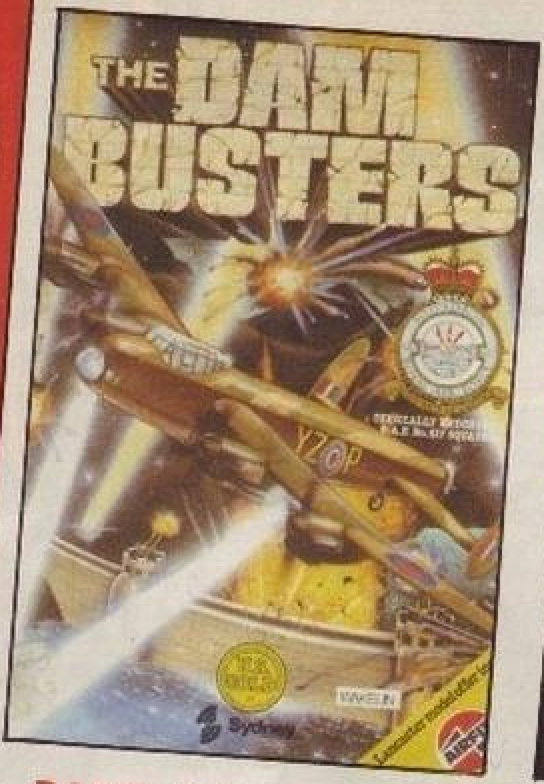
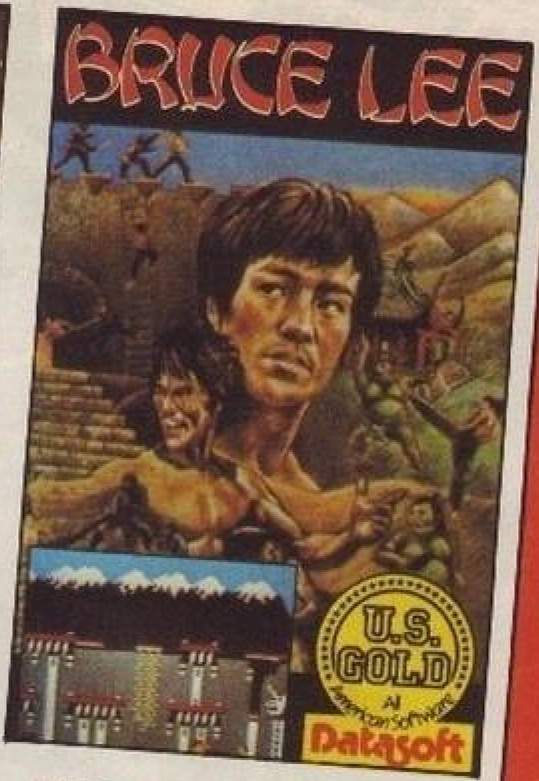
RAID

The dramatic and controversial follow up to *Beach Head* in which you organise an air-strike on nuclear missile silos to try to pre-empt a launch against American cities. Follow this up with an attack on a building which looks uncomfortably like the Kremlin. Probably the most exciting shoot-em-up on the Amstrad. Excellent graphics



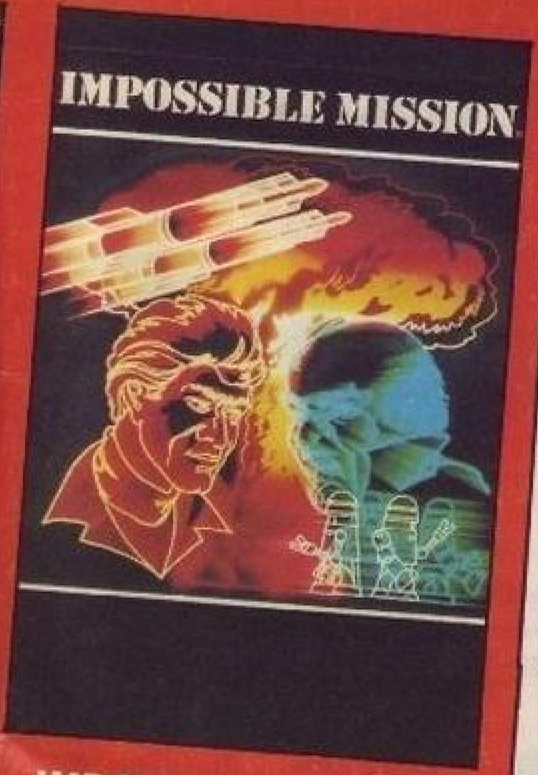
DAMBUSTERS

A flight simulator with a difference. You take on the jobs of all seven crew members of a Lancaster bomber as you re-enact the famous 2nd World War bombing mission. The program offers you several different control panels, plus views through the cockpit window as you weave past search-lights, flak and barrage balloons before launching your bouncing bomb. Superbly atmospheric.



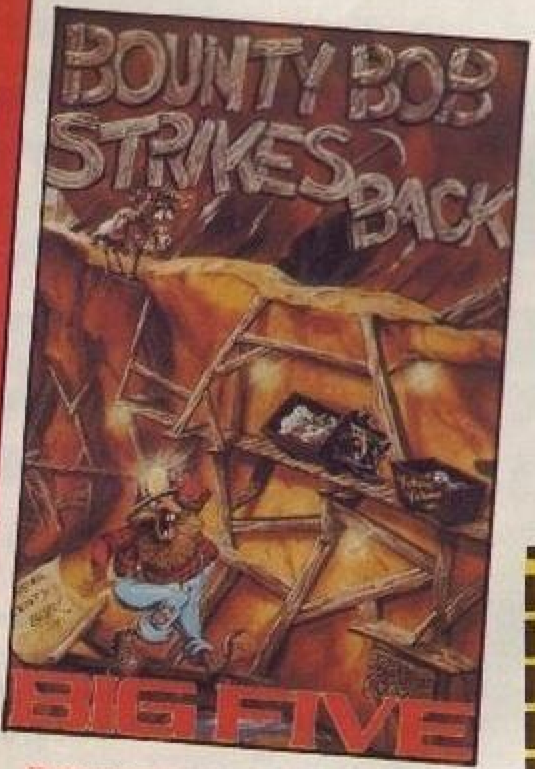
BRUCE LEE

A highly-entertaining platform game in which you take the part of the famousmartial arts hero. Punch and kick your way through 20 screens of devious obstacles, hounded all the while by the cunning Yamo and Ninja.



IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

The original version of this game made everyone's eyes pop out with its astounding animation. Explore an underground network of robot-patrolled rooms in search of passwords which will eventually destroy the evil Professor Mindbender. Superbly orignal, brain-stretching platform action.



BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK

Miner 49'er was the program which started the craze for wacky platform games. Bounty Bob is its follow up, developed in the States over many months, and it's more addictive than ever with 25 diabolically difficult screens. Matter transporters, hoists, slides, suction units, cannons, pulverisers – they're all there.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Apart from *Beach-Head* released in the summer, all these games are extremely new. Indeed, at time of writing these pages several have not yet been released. They are all due out by the time this magazine goes on sale or soon afterwards. However in software production delays can easily happen, and if either of the games you order is not yet available it will hold up the despatch of your parcel.

If you're keen to get the software promptly, please refer to the Ed Lines page for the latest information on release dates and choose your programs accordingly.

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BEACH-HEAD RAID IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

The game I would like from group B is (circle a maximum of one – but if you circled two in group A, do not circle any here):
DAMBUSTERS BOUNTY BOB BRUCE LEE

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NEXT MONTH

▶ ReAction

The sacks are arriving just as fast as the horse and cart can carry them. We'll be printing a HUGE number of your lively letters. If you haven't written to us yet, don't you think it's about time you did? We *like* hearing from you.

▶ It's Show Time!

We bring you a full report on the second Amstrad show. All the hottest and newest hardware, software, plug-ins, stick-ons and pull-outs. Plus photos in glorious AmstradActionMonochrome.

▶ Serious Software

There's bags of useful stuff coming out for Arnold these days. We'll be showing you how to choose and use a Database, taking you on a tour of some Basic Compilers and scrutinising some powerful graphics products. Plus new of the latest products.

▶ Massive maps

Not just one, but two full AmstradActionColor mega-maps are being plotted in that top secret Special Ops room. Can you wait? You'll have to – but it's going to be worth it.

PLUS

▶ ACTION TEST – all the games reviewed by our unique and exceptionally thorough system.
▶ CHEAT MODE – tips and pokes on the big games.
▶ ADVENTURES – The Pilgrim boldly goes forth to bring you new reviews from the magical land of adventuring.
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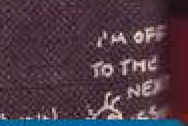

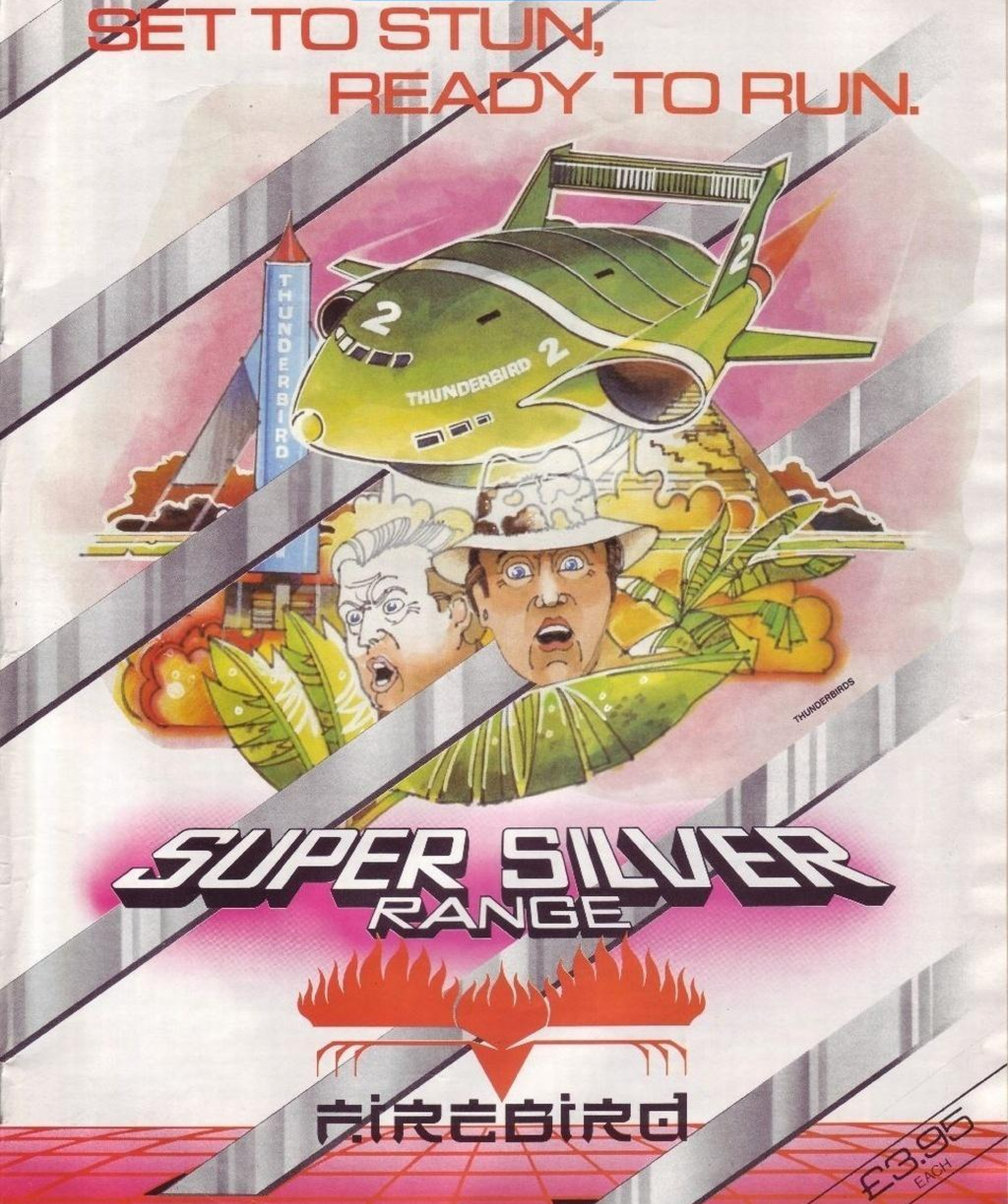
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